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NOVEMBER 8
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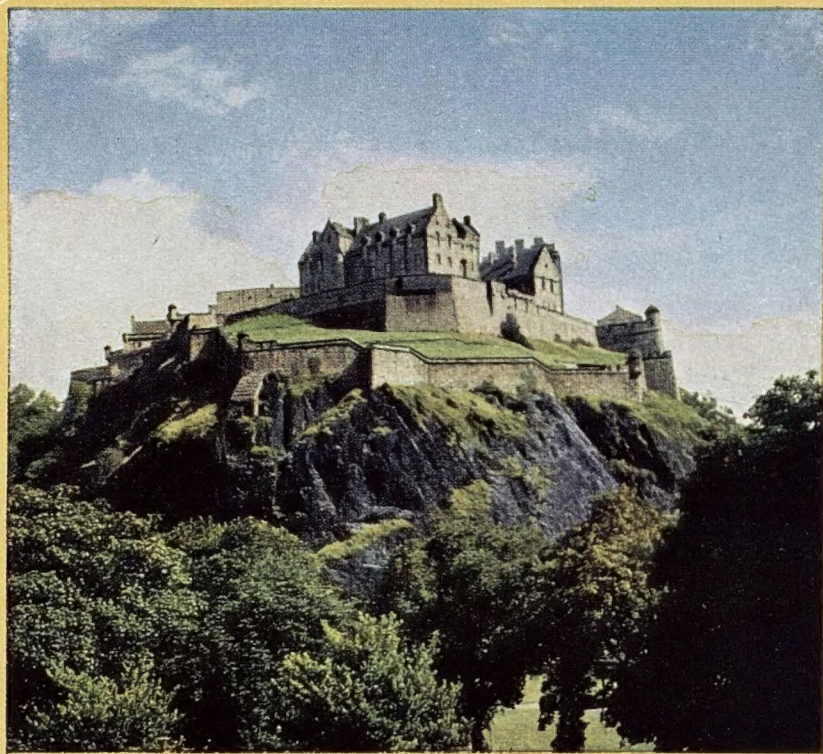


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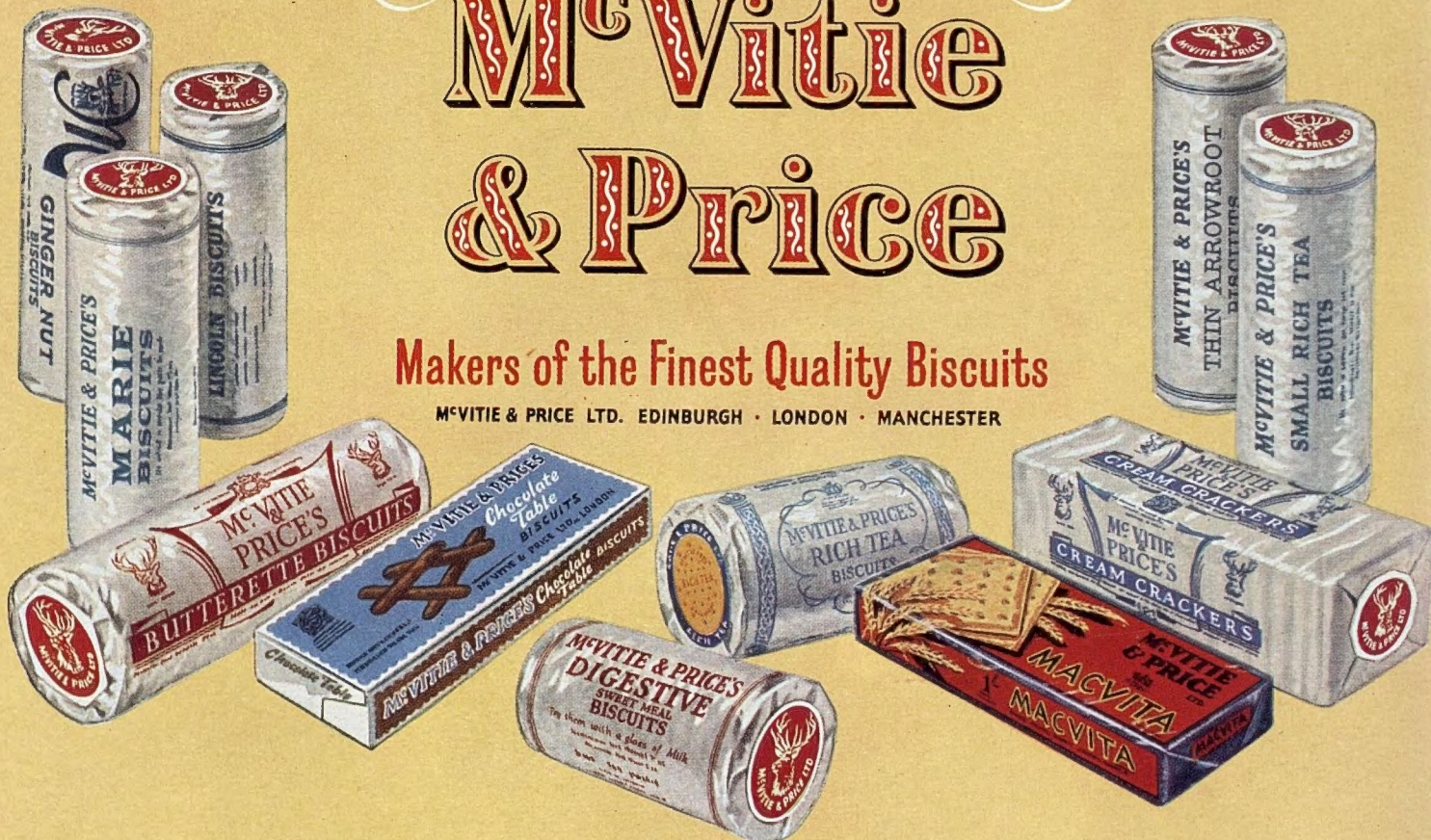
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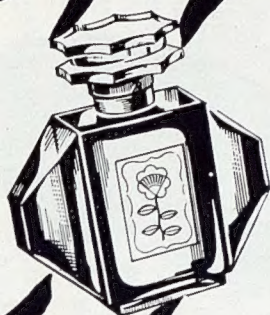
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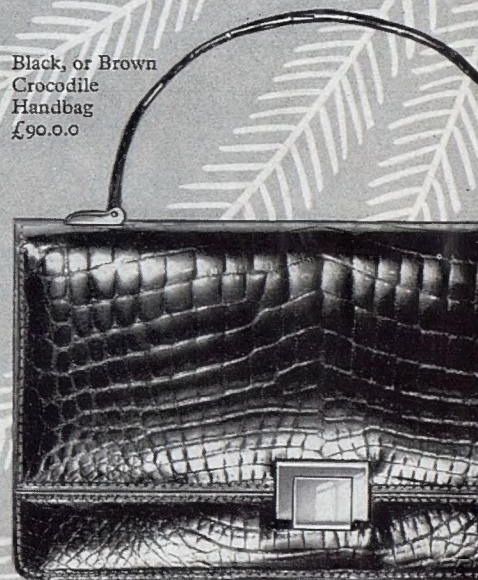
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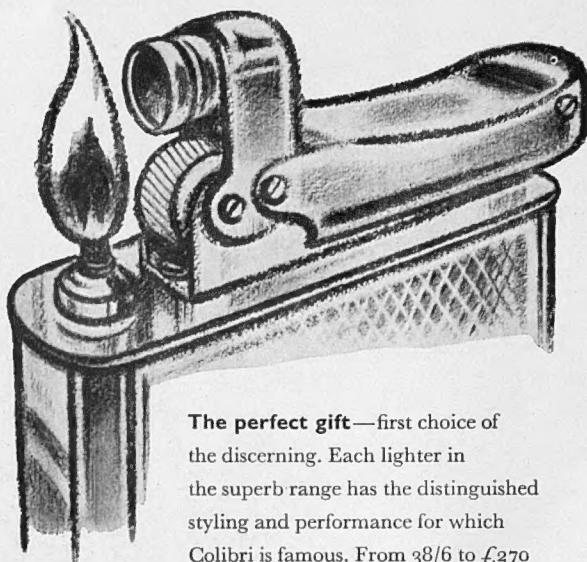
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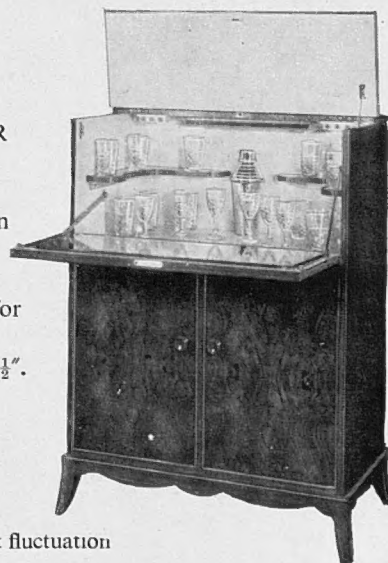
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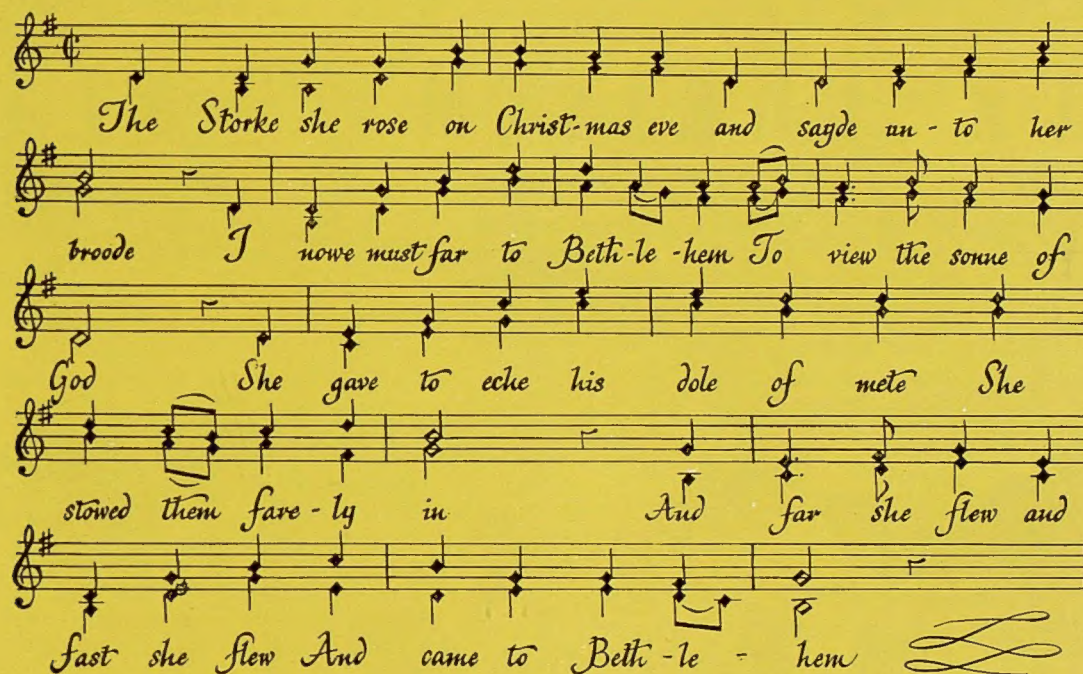
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THE STORKE CAROL

This anonymous carol was found on the flyleaf of a 16th century prayer book. It has been set to music by Donald Swann



The storke she rose on Christmas eve
And sayde unto her broode,
I nowe must far to Bethlehem
To viewe the sonne of God.
She gave to eche his dole of mete
She stowed them farely in
And far she flew and fast she flew
And came to Bethlehem.

Nowe where is he of David's line
She asked at house and halle
He is not here, they spoke hardly
But in a mangier stalle.
She found him in a mangier stalle
With that most Holy Mayde
The gentle storke she wept to see
The Lord so rudely layde.

Then from her panting breast she plucked
The feathers white and warm,
She strewed them in the mangier bed
To keep the Lord from harm.
"Now blessed be the gentle storke
Forever more," quoth he
"For that she saw my sadde estate
And showed such pity.

Full welcome shall she ever be
In hamlet and in halle
And called henceforth the blessed bird
And friend of babies all."

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THE AUTHOR, a noted astrologer and President of the Zodiac Circle, suggests a point to party-givers: blend your guests like the ingredients in a cocktail. Here are some affinities and their reverses under Christmas stars

YOUR CHRISTMAS STARS

Philip Allingham

Illustrations by
Elizabeth Wall

TAURUS (April 21—May 21) and Virgo (Aug. 24—Sept. 23) are in perfect step. The Bull loves to talk; the Maiden is prepared to listen. Both have love of music; take joy in social activities, an interest in the artistic, though Taurus is the more enterprising and creative of the two. Virgo is essentially painstaking and loves orderliness. Both are Earth signs and, though different in character, have similar temperaments.



SCORPIO (Oct. 24—Nov. 22) has love in his eyes for Pisces (Feb. 20—March 20). And the glance is reciprocated. Here are discovered mutual interests and even a stronger romantic attraction. Both belong to the Water Triplexity from which they have inherited melancholic temperaments; they are capable of finding happiness in being miserable together for hours on end. Scorpio is governed by Mars; Pisces by Neptune—in this instance it would be utterly erroneous to assume that fire and water do not mix. The Scorpion is the more forceful of the two, and the Fishes need someone to make up their minds for them. Alone, they hesitate and float dreamily in a sea of doubt.

LEO (July 24—Aug. 22) admires the directness of Sagittarius (Nov. 23—Dec. 22), who aims at what he wants and always gets it. He is the sportsman in the company with a passion for fair play. Though fascinated by the Lion's dignity and self-assertiveness, he is not intimidated by it nor afraid to express criticism. The element related to both is fire. Their temperaments are choleric and liable to explode with little provocation. Yet the Archer at heart is a true hero-worshiper. And the Lion loves to be a hero.



GEMINI (May 22—June 22) is the sign of duality. The Twins are either right on top of the world or deep down in the doldrums. Often charming but rather puzzling individuals, it requires an intuitive type such as Aquarius (Jan. 21—Feb. 19) to understand them properly. The Water Carrier is quite unpredictable, but a buoyant companion, very hospitable, warm-hearted, enormously generous, protective. Both are Air signs and natural affinities. The basis of their temperaments is sanguinic. When together the atmosphere is light and convivial. A welcome party team.

BUT BEWARE the results of mixing anyone born under Aries (March 21—April 20) with someone whose zodiacal sign is Cancer (June 23—July 23). Personalities would be sure to clash. Cancer might not get the best of it in the end, but would considerably crab the self-assurance of the Ram. The Crab is placid on the surface, highly sensitive underneath; touchy concerning criticism; influenced always through the emotions. Whereas the Ram is self-opinionated, outspoken, obstinate, utterly fearless. So best introduce Aries to Leo and Cancer to Pisces.



THE CHANCES ARE that the Goat (Dec. 22—Jan. 20) started off in life as a mixed-up kid. Slow to outgrow adolescent inhibitions, he is liable to be sensitive and resentful. If closeted all evening with Capricorn, normally even-tempered Libra (Sept. 24—Oct. 23) would become quite unbalanced. Better pair off Libra with Aquarius and Capricorn with Virgo.

SONG AND DANCE STEPS

WHEN the Royal Princesses were children they took part in many pantomimes at Windsor Castle. They are seen (right) in a duet and dance routine from "Old Mother Red Riding Boots" in 1945. Reproduced by permission of L. & H. Nathan is (below) a programme of this pantomime with the cast of all who took part



THEATRE ROYAL

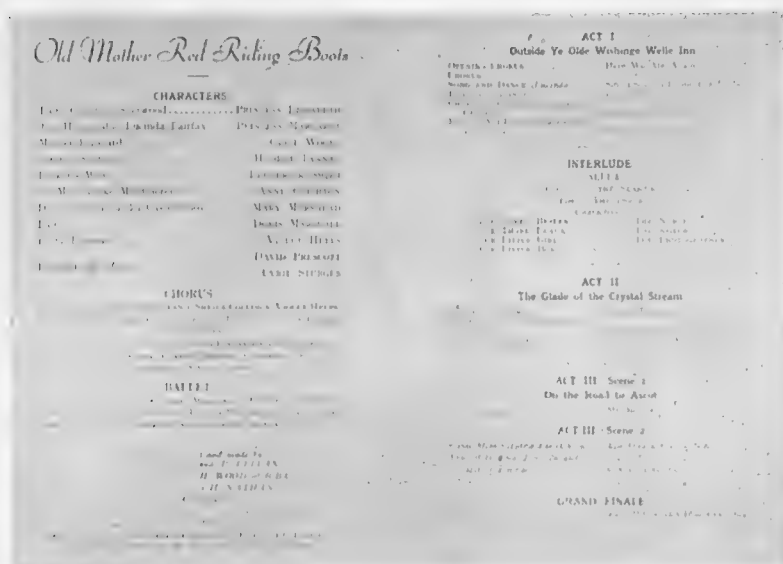
JOYCE HARDING writes here of her researches among royal dramatic occasions which only the most privileged audiences were fortunate enough to witness

THOUGHTS of pantomime are already in all our minds. What choice are we to be offered this year? And which will we select?

To gain complete satisfaction we should produce our own. This is precisely what the Royal Family did between 1941 and 1945 when Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret were children. Acting has always engaged the attention of royal personages. In the late Victorian days when families were larger, containing within their own intimate circle sufficient material to cast all but the more spectacular of musical comedies, amateur dramatics of various kinds and qualities were an accepted form of entertainment.

In Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* such frivolity was well to the fore, and this book preceded Queen Victoria's Golden Days. This we all know, and that Charles Dickens and his friend Wilkie Collins wrote plays for themselves and their families and friends to appear in.

WE are almost certainly not so well aware, unless we are knowledgeably immersed in the floods of literature that have alternatively tried to take the lid off or keep it firmly in place on Victorian life, that royal circles were as fond of "dressing up" as were their less exalted subjects. The forms this took varied from short plays such as *A Night In The Hills*, in which Sir Henry Ponsonby and the Hon. A. Yorke appeared, to charade-type affairs and the generally popular *tableaux vivants*. These, indeed,



became so common a feature of court life that their fame has come down the years undiminished to all of us. The cast they could with truth have claimed as "all star," while the roll-call of participants reads like eligibles for a royal procession.

The truth is that Queen Victoria *was* amused by them, and, adapting the words of the song a trifle, "What Queen Victoria Wants, Queen Victoria Gets," including a repeat performance if necessary. Examining some of the programmes that Nathan's, the ubiquitous theatrical designers, have preserved, I would say that in big-name drawing power the 1870 season would be hard to beat. It took place at Kimbolton Castle. Starting the programme off with a roll of drums was *The Last Vow* led by H.R.H. the Princess of Wales, in which not a commoner took part. In any case the first commoner to appear in the programme was the famous M.P., rich, social and racehorse-loving Henry Chaplin, hardly so very common really. The Prince of Wales then took the starring rôle of Douglas dying at the Battle of Langside, with Mary Queen of Scots mourning over him. The Duchess of Manchester took this heartrending part. And while the Marquess of Hartington was no doubt excellent as "an abbot" I somehow prefer the surely malicious piece of type casting which gave the Rev. Hope Grant the rôle of priest—taxing theologically speaking, if in no other way.

Another item of fancy was *The Painter's Dream* in which the dream was the Princess of Wales and the painter, so Victoriously appropriate, the Prince himself.

A later series in 1888 at Osborne was so much enjoyed by the dear Queen herself, Queen Victoria, that she demanded, and as already indicated, got, a second performance.

THE programme had a most cultural and egg-head standard. The offerings—the period word—began with *Ruth*, included *The Queen Of Sheba* and *Carmen* and continued with *The Winter's Tale* and *Elizabeth And Essex*. The results exceeded expectations. The Hon. Alex Yorke, arranger and director, proved himself "a born stage manager" but "the signal success of the evening was certainly scored by the Princess Beatrice who posed first as an unEthiopian edition of the Queen of Sheba, and afterwards as an ideal Queen Elizabeth." This source of information is by no means uncritical, however; "it was at first difficult to recognize

Sir Henry Ponsonby as King Solomon in all his glory, wearing a headdress of burnished metal and cloth of gold" while of Prince Henry of Battenberg it says he "looked more like a TOREADOR than Sir Walter Raleigh." Now on the face of it this seems a gratuitous insult indeed to Prince Henry until it is realized that he appeared as both characters in different sketches. Presumably he was more effective in one rôle than the other. Or did the writer mean what he said?

Perhaps he did, for *Ally Sloper*, admitting that in *Carmen* Prince Henry made a handsome Escamillo, added a trifle ambiguously that it was difficult to imagine how he could transform himself into an effective Sir Walter Raleigh. And one wonders how satisfied the stage-struck royal prince was with the distinctly cold comfort of "his rendering of that part, however, was *apparently* (my italics) most successful." How he must have been haunted by uncertainty at every thought of that ghastly adverb.

BUT this paper did not lavish praise. It began its report "To the privileged few who were permitted to witness them, the *tableaux vivants* produced at Osborne were a pleasant surprise." A pleasant surprise forsooth! What had they been expecting? An Irish wake? "In the tableaux of *The Queen Of Sheba* the Princess Beatrice is said to have represented Solomon's illustrious visitor capitally." Nothing wrong with capitally, I agree, but "is said"? *Ruth* also "seems" to have been a great success; again that nagging doubt; while poor Freda Biddulph's Naomi was only "pronounced" excellent. However, in a burst of bonhomie at the end, the writer concedes that "some of the costumes were excellent" and carries his point by declaring them "quite equal to those of a good rollicking ballet."

It will have been seen that royalty tended to stick to high life when it came to treading the boards. "He that plays the king" can in short be a king, type-casting with a vengeance. It could, of course, be argued that royalty had a flair for it, understanding the nuances instinctively. Certainly, when in 1890 at Balmoral a comedy obviously "of the people," *Popping The Question*, was performed with H.R.H. Princess Henry of Battenberg as Miss Winterblossom and the Hon. Alex Yorke as Mr. Primrose, many

[Continued overleaf



THE STAR'S OWN CHOICE

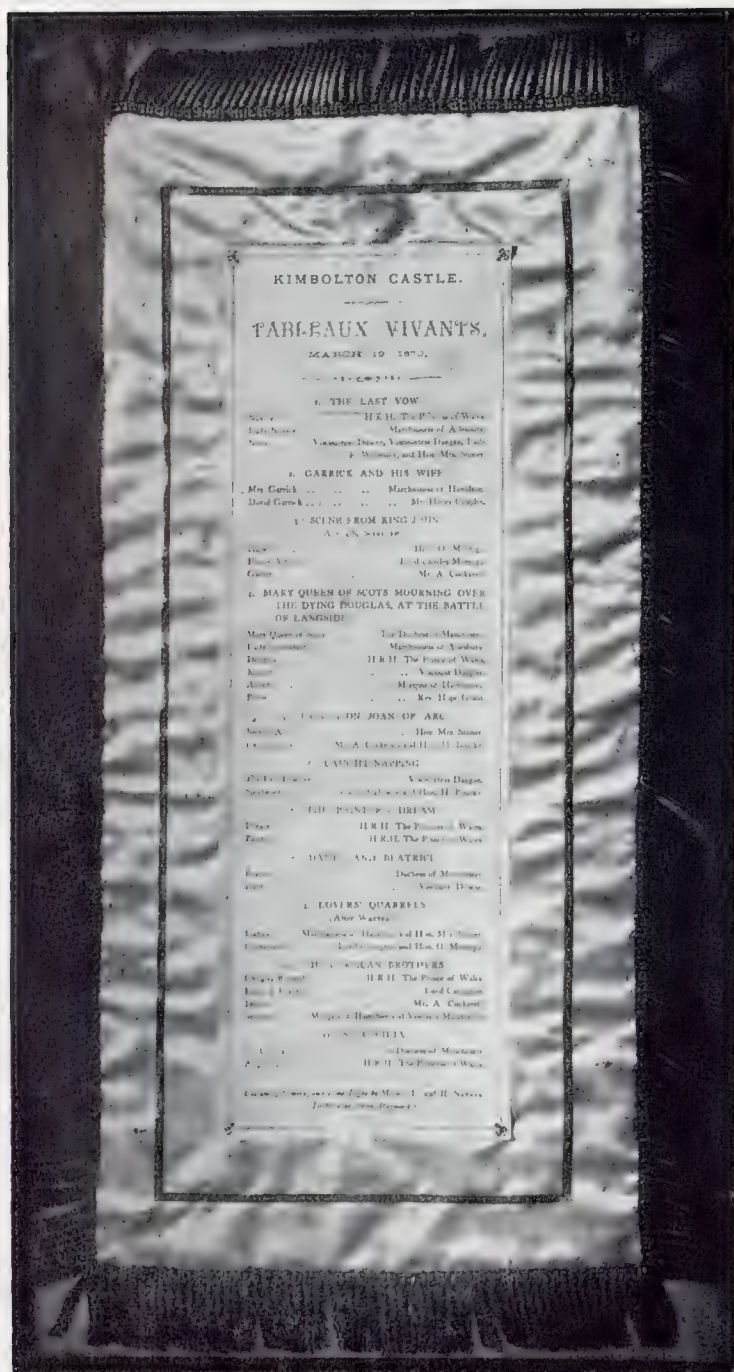
ON the left can be seen the original drawing of a design which Princess Margaret sent to Nathan's for the kind of costume she wished to wear when she played Lucinda Fairfax in "Old Mother Red Riding Boots." On the right is a photograph taken at the time showing how faithfully Nathan's carried out this Royal request



Studio Lisa



The fine plumed hat (above) which Edward VIII wore when he attended the ball at Devonshire House in 1887 and (right) "his Elizabethan dress of black velvet embroidered in steel and jet as a doublet" while (extreme right) he is seen in the illustration from the "Lady's Pictorial." (Below) a programme from the Kimbolton Castle revels



regular troupers were absent. It is significant that no echoes reach us for a second Royal Command Performance of this nature.

And again when an historical fancy dress party was held at Devonshire House in 1887 which the Prince of Wales graced with his presence, he chose to represent the Grand Master of the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem and the Chevalier of Malta. It is as such that he is seen in our illustration above.

The Elizabethan doublet is his costume now owned by Nathan's.

Quoting contemporaneously from the *Lady's Pictorial*:

"Truly picturesque and dignified looked his Royal Highness in his Elizabethan dress of black velvet embroidered in steel and jet as a doublet, trunks of grey silk slashed with black velvet straps wrought with steel; sword belt of silk-embroidered velvet, the sword in a black velvet steel-mounted scabbard. His Royal Highness's black silk mantle had the White Cross of Malta on one shoulder and the hat had a similar cross in diamonds in front; and was trimmed with white plumes. There were high black turreted boots and large spurs and spur straps and Crispin gloves; and then the Prince wore the Royal Orders of St. John of Jerusalem, Malta and the Garter."

A SUITABLY fitting partner was the Princess of Wales, who, as Margaret de Valois, "looked superb in a dress of white satin, richly embroidered with silver. Her train, which fell from the back of a high lace collar, was of cloth of gold, lined with silver, and magnificently jewelled. A small crown of diamonds, with loose bands of diamonds falling from the forehead, surmounted the headdress, and she wore long diamond ear-rings, and collar of pearls, and a great number of other necklets. The little daughter of Sir Francis and Lady Knollys bore Her Royal Highness's train and was attired in white and gold. The Duchess of York, Princess Charles of Denmark, Princess Victoria of Wales, the Duchess of Fife, and Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein were attired as ladies in the suite of Margaret de Valois and followed in her train. The Royal group occupied a dais at the top of the saloon, where the various processions, which were quite the feature of the evening's entertainment, passed before them. The Princess bowed and smiled as she recognized some of those in the processions."

But pantomimes possess a scope that range outside such confining barriers. With infinite subtlety, indeed, do they weave the two strands together: Prince Charmings are balanced by Cinderellas; funny barons by sinister sisters.

During the last war the young Princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret, offsetting the long, drear, wartime evenings, developed a keen taste for appearing in pantomimes; and each year from 1942 onwards for some years they were the prime movers in pantomimes held at Windsor Castle.

I am indebted to the Strand Electric Company for some details

[Continued on page 52]



T. Buckeridge

COCO — MASTER OF THE HUMOURS OF MELANCHOLY

COCO the Clown (Nicholas Poliakov—he is Russian) is one of the best known clowns in Britain. He is a man of the circus, having spent most of his adult life under the Big Top, and he has worked practically exclusively for the Mills Brothers, Cyril and Bernard, having been discovered by that Grand Old Man of the sawdust ring, the late Bertram Mills, their father. The engagement was for four weeks, but has in fact lasted ever since. The longest serving artist in this circus (he is about sixty) he has watched his children and his grandchildren follow his bent

The CIRCUS

in Ceramics

by ANTONY HIPPISEY COXE

ONE of the many pleasant things about being the proprietor of a circus in ceramics is that nearly all one's oldest performers are real stars, permanently recorded in the days of their triumph. Though it must be admitted that the Victorian love of blood and thunder has led to at least one of them, the Lion Queen seen below, being commemorated at a most distressing moment of death.

No doubt to many, the Lion Queen so nonchalantly shaking hands with the King of Beasts in the group on the left is the same as the one whose tragic end is depicted at the bottom of the right-hand page. There were many, including newspaper reporters of the day, who thought so, too. But actually there have been at least three Lion Queens.

The first, Polly Hilton, appeared in her uncle's fairground menagerie in the 1840s. Wombwell realized what a draw this was, and persuaded a young woman called Nellie Chapman to become his Lady of the Lions. This is the girl in the pink skirt and blue bodice at the top of the page, alias Pauline de Vere—an aristocratic pseudonym, in a way befitting the person who was shortly to become "Lady George" Sanger, of circus fame.

IN 1847 she was commanded to appear at Windsor before Queen Victoria, who showed a peculiar interest in wild animals and their trainers. After putting her head in a lion's mouth and spending nearly half an hour in the cage, Nellie Chapman received a pat on the back from the Prince Consort, and a gold watch and chain and the good wishes of the Queen. It was old Wombwell who really gained: he admitted afterwards that the command performance added £100 a day to his receipts.

It must have been about this time that the pottery figure appeared. There are two versions. In one the beast on her left is painted as a tiger and in the other as a leopard. A year or two later she forsook the lion's den. But the act was too popular to lose, so Wombwell created the third Lion Queen. This was the



Nellie Chapman, second Lady of the Lions, acted under the more aristocratic pseudonym of Pauline de Vere until she became "Lady George" Sanger



Performing dogs (left) are a valuable feature of any circus, and therefore equally helpful to the decoration of pottery

As graceful as an illustrative motif as in the sawdust ring is the white caparisoned horse on which even clowns like Auriol rode with grace and dignity





Gaily amusing little pottery utensils, attractively emblazoned with heads as the plate (right) or clowns jumping through hoops (above), can be found

daughter of a wind instrumentalist in the brass band and a cousin of Nellie Chapman, called Ellen Bright.

It is her death that is so unrealistically recorded at the foot of the page; for the animal here is shown as a leopard, while the newspaper cuttings reveal quite clearly that it was a tiger that killed her. It happened at Chatham on January 11, 1850; and the details of the tragedy shocked the whole of England. Yet it is impossible to blame anyone but the victim. At the inquest a witness thought that "if she had kept the whip away from the animal it would not have attacked her." And in Lord George Sanger's autobiography he states that time and time again his wife begged her successor not to irritate the animals . . . "but Miss Bright preferred to give them sharp little stinging cuts," with the inevitable result. Now that the horror has been dimmed by time, the tragedy reads like a story from Struwpeter.

WOMBWELL and his company occur often in Staffordshire pottery. Not only are both his Lion Queens thus commemorated, but his showfront, inscribed "Wombwell's Royal Menagerie of the Wonderful Burds (*sic*) and Beasts from most parts of the World," is one of the rarer collector's pieces, which like its companion, "Polito's Menagerie," may be worth £100 or more.

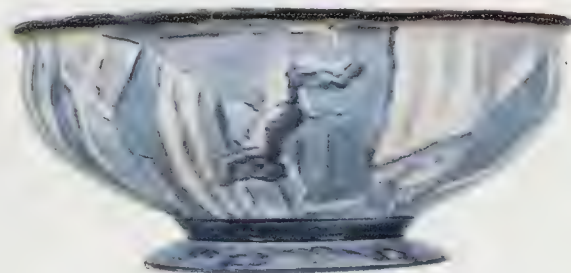
One can find his lion, Wallace, in pottery, too. This beast was the hero of a fight, instigated by two sporting gentlemen, at Warwick on July 26, 1825, in which a series of bulldogs were set to bait two lions, Nero and Wallace. Nero took no notice, but Wallace killed or maimed every dog which came in to attack. Mercifully such exhibitions are never seen in the Circus today, and even 125 years ago they belonged more to the fairground than to the rings and stages of London's circuses and theatres.

It was here that Isaac Van Amburgh made his name. This trainer, believed to be the first to train a mixed group, arrived in England from America in 1838, aged thirty-seven, to appear in "The Brute Tamer of Pompeii," at Astley's Amphitheatre which

[Continued overleaf]



Isaac Van Amburgh, coming from America in 1838, is believed to be the first person to train successfully a mixed group of animals



A charming Wedgwood bowl in the author's collection of ceramics has anonymously inspired decoration

The third Lady of the Lions met a tragic fate at Chatham in 1850 as illustrated (left below) and commemorated in Staffordshire pottery



Illustrated London News



Death of the Lion Queen



Van Amburgh (above), "The Brute Tamer from Pompeii," with one of his beasts in Staffordshire china; and (right) engaged with his mixed troupe at the Vauxhall Gardens where he was performing



was the very first of all modern circuses. His success was instantaneous. You can tell that by looking at the china group at the top of page. This must be one of the last groups to be modelled wholly in the round. If you compare it with the Lion Queens, you will see that they are flatter. Turn them around and you will find nothing but the white, unpainted back of what is little more than a bas-relief. Wallace, on the other hand, is completely three dimensional. The change took place in the 1830s, and was due to the popularity of these Staffordshire figures. In fact, they became mass-produced.

From Astley's Amburgh went to Drury Lane. Here the Queen saw him no less than seven times in eight weeks. On her second visit, the receipts are said to have reached the record figure of £712 17s. 6d. She was so entranced with this trainer that she ordered Sir David Wilkie to paint a portrait of him, standing among his beasts; and in 1844 she called him, as she had the Lion Queen, to a command performance at Windsor.

He was also a favourite of the Duke of Wellington, who also wanted a portrait of the trainer and commissioned Landseer to paint it for Apsley House. Later, C. I. Miller wrote a song about him which ran:

He sticks his head in the lion's mouth
And holds it there awhile,
And then he takes it out again
And greets you with a smile. . . .

Van Amburgh was a great publicist. He had jugs made, on which he and his animals are shown in relief, as you can see on page 17. These were sold for his benefit at each performance. He was one of the first to plug the moral and educational value of a wild beast show. One of his handbills reads, "The intrepidity evinced by Van Amburgh and his wonderful power over the Tenants of the Forest must awaken the enquiring mind to a fresh interest in Natural History." This attitude can perhaps be traced back to the first booth in which he ever appeared, which went by the scholarly title of The Zoological Institute. Unlike the third Lion Queen, Isaac Van Amburgh did not tease his animals, and he died peacefully in bed on November 29, 1865.

Auriol, most famous of French clowns, is another member of

The French clown, Auriol, juggler, equilibrist and acrobat, jumping over a squad of soldiers firing their muskets, part of his act



The performing pig (right) is on a nursery tea service from Holland. It was given to the author by Jo van Doveren, the circus historian, and critic



my china charivari who also appeared at Drury Lane. He came over to work with Dejean's *Cirque National* in January, 1849. With an acrobat for a father, a trick-rider for a mother and a rope-dancer as a tutor, it is not surprising to find Auriol working as acrobat, juggler, equilibrist, riding master and grotesque. He was "a dainty Hercules" at one stage of his career, but he made his name as a clown.

His portrait occurs on at least two in the series of circus plates which were made in France 116 years ago. In one, as you can see on page 16, he is somersaulting over a squad of soldiers firing their muskets, a trick which is also seen in one of the pictures surrounding his portrait.

With him at Drury Lane was his son, also a clown; while his daughter, Francesca, married the Englishman, Dickie Flexmore, who was considered by *The Times* to be the best clown since Grimaldi.

AURIOL can also be seen as a trick-rider in the same set of plates, together with the school rider, Baucher, Madame Lejars and the Brothers Loisset, whose plate is reproduced below. The Loissets were a famous equestrian family throughout the greater part of the last century. The founder is often said to have been born in 1793 at Metz, the son of an officer killed at the Battle of Marengo. But as one so often finds in Circus history, this was probably invented as a piece of publicity. Tristram Remy, one of the founder members of Union of Circus Historians, and to whom I am indebted for many corrections, tells me that the original Loisset was born in 1797 at Charleville, and that his father was a nail-maker! However, by 1833 he had learnt enough about show business to bring his company to the *Cirque Olympique* in Paris, and amongst his company was Auriol.

It is Jean-Baptiste Antoine Loisset's two sons who are depicted on the plate. One, François, married Caroline Loyo, most famous of all *écuyères*, the toast of Paris, *la diva de la cravache*, and the subject of the following conversation between two clubmen, as reported by Jules Janin:

"Did you see her on that bay she broke last year?"

"No, alas! You see, last year I went to Florence to see the Pitti Palace, and..."

"Sir! When Caroline rides a new horse one does not go gallivanting off to look at Pitti Palaces! One stays at the Circus!"

Baptiste, the second son, also married an *écuyère*, star of the German circus Renz, Mademoiselle Adeline. But the most famous of all the Loissets was Emilie, a niece of the two brothers on the plate. She and her sister Clothilde were also circus riders. When the family circus was sold in 1878, they went to Paris, where, it is said, they took an engagement at *Le Cirque d'Eté* at a salary of three thousand francs a month.

AT the end of the first season Clothilde married Jean XXII, Prince of Reuss; but Emilie confined her interest to the sawdust ring, and for the next four years went from success to success. Then at the height of her fame she became engaged to the Prince of Hatzfeld. But the wedding never took place. One afternoon at rehearsal, her horse, *Pour Toujours*, fell. As she lay on the sawdust she said, "*Je suis brisée. Je sens que je vais mourir.*" The fork of her sidesaddle had caused grave internal injuries; and she died a few days later, humming *La Valse des Gardes*, which was her entrance music, in her delirium, so some writers say. Perhaps as M. Franconi carried her out of the ring that spring afternoon, one



Van Amburgh again. A great publicist, he had jugs made, as this one illustrates, with himself and his animals in bold relief

of the ring boys picked her little cutting whip up from the tan; if he did, he may have wondered at the words engraved around the handle, "*Princesse ne daigne, Reine ne puis, Loisset suis.*"

So much for the stars of my pottery troupe. Perhaps other famous performers will join the company. I cannot believe that Léotard, inventor of the flying trapeze, and the famous Blondin are not somewhere portrayed in china. At the moment my aerial acts are anonymous. They consist of Weinberg's crazy trapezist, souvenir of a trip to Schumann's Circus in Copenhagen, and the charming Wedgwood bowl. Though I do not know what trapeze act inspired its decoration, it is warmly associated with the friend and colleague who gave it to me during the war.

THE little mug, too, was a present, which came to me in the navy. The performing pig is typical of the designs on a nursery tea service from Holland. But this is a more direct link with the Circus, because it was a present from Jo van Doveren, circus historian, critic and Press Chief of Strassburger's Circus. The Italian plate is one of several which have been presents from my family; while the performing dogs, like most of the other pieces, I have picked up myself. The exception is Lion Queen III, a guest artist who is appearing for this performance only by kind permission of your Editor.



Weinberg's crazy trapezist (left), souvenir of a trip to Schumann's Circus in wonderful Copenhagen



A famous equestrian family throughout the greater part of the last century were the Brothers Loisset (right)

"FLEECE WITH DECEMBER SNOW THE MEMORIES COME TO FOLD"

4 eminent writers in widely differing fields track back over the years recalling the Christmases which for them contained the quintessence of the season, and are brought freshly to life each year

MINOU DROUET

C'EST à toi que je le dois, Philippe, à toi qui ne peux plus rien pour moi, à toi pour qui je ne peux plus rien—que te dire merci, pour ce Noël-là.

Tu te souviens? Tes parents nous avaient invités à dîner chez eux, pour le soir de Noël. J'avais voulu t'aider à mettre le couvert. En me passant un verre, ton doigt en fit chanter le cristal. L'émerveillement fermé mes yeux de sa main tiède. Je te suppliai de recommencer. Mais tu fis chavirer le verre, et je me sentis pâlir de bonheur. Ce chant, Phil, qui rejaillit du buffet sur le rebord du tiroir, pour rebondir sur le parquet en cascade de pluie, si pareille à celle qui arpège nos fusains, au début des averses de printemps, quelle féerie. A nos pieds, le verre avait tout poudré d'arc-en-ciel.

Mes mains se sont jointes toutes seules, et je t'ai supplié:

—Phil, Phil, si tu m'aimes vraiment, casses-en un autre, un seul, rien qu'un!

Et tu en as laissé tomber un autre.

Personne ne peut savoir combien il est difficile de faire chanter un verre qui meurt.

Alors, tu en as brisé un troisième.

Si l'on pouvait briser le premier frisson rose dont l'aurore maquille la joue de la mer en face ma fenêtre, au Pouliguen, je suis sûre, Phil, qu'il s'effeuillerait avec ce déferlement de perles, si doux qu'il ferait rire, d'un rire mouillé, chaque vague.

Tu m'as regardée, tu m'as dit:

—Minou, Minou, comme tu es belle, quand tu es heureuse. . . . A cette époque, j'avais une peur constante de devenir aveugle. Je t'ai répondu:

—Oui, Phil, le bonheur, c'est une robe dont je n'ai pas l'habitude. Laisse-moi encore la porter une seconde, rien qu'une seconde, dis? Tu as pris mes mains, tu as dit:

—Je me marierai avec toi quand je serai grand . . . et tu seras heureuse toute votre vie. . . . Mon grandpère dit que tu as du génie, et je. . . . Je t'ai serré les mains avec rage:

—Je me fiche de mon génie, c'est pas un jouet pour petite fille, je te le donne, va, si tu veux, mais toi donne-moi un autre verre, Phil, donne. Et je dansais sur ce tapis de fée, un tapis qui chantait sous mes pieds qui craquait sous moi, du rire joyeux dont les marrons qui grillent narguent la flamme. Alors, je t'ai dit ma joie, ton coeur n'a plus été que l'arbre jumeau vers qui mon coeur lançait les cris de sa joie, ces fils de la Vierge dont, pendant le mystère des nuit d'été, le clair de lune joint les troncs voisins. Je savais que si je parlais, si je laissais chanter mon coeur, chaque mot déshabillerait le tien de tout pouvoir de résister.

Mon Dieu, ce Noël qui faisait de ton parquet la magie d'une vitre brochée de givre, un givre où flottait, çà et là, un astre rigé dans son rêve: le pied d'un verre resté intact.

Il nous fallut subir la mort de tous les verres qui agonisèrent en hoquet, pour retrouver, au dernier, le chant somptueux du premier.

A cette seconde-là, ta mère entra.

Jamais, Phil, désormais, je ne connaîtrai aucune joie, sans sentir au creux le moi, la certitude que va surgir, immanquablement, un visage pareil à celui de ta maman, ce jour-là, un visage qui cesse d'avoir des yeux, un nez, une bouche, pour n'être plus que la blancheur tragique d'un écran de cinéma sur lequel, au moment où notre émerveillement devient sonore comme un cri, apparaissent, silencieusement, deux petits mots:

"The end."

Seulement, Phil, toi qui savais ce qui t'attendait, tu m'as donné le plus somptueux Noël que je connaîtrai jamais: celui qui fait croire au coeur des autres.



MINOU DROUET is still the nine days wonder of the poetic world. Her books published in France and over here have been best-sellers. In Britain she appeared on television to test her powers

ORIEL MALET

I REMEMBER a Christmas that nearly got lost.

I was staying with some friends, who had been lent a chalet in the mountains, on the edge of France. The house clung to the side of the mountain like a limpet, and it was very isolated. Icicles hung from the low sloping roof like sugar sticks; it was lovely to snap them off each morning and suck them, watching the sun like a pink stain on the snow. The house was full; skis were everywhere, and there was a red sled on the veranda.

It began to snow as we arrived, and did not stop for days, cutting us off from the village. There were no calendars in the house, and no radio. The owners had left a supply of food and wine in the cellar, and we kept a big fire of logs and pine-cones burning all day. Once, we plunged out into the whirling black mass of snow and cloud,

GEORGE MIKES is the Hungarian author who arrived in this country just before the last war as a refugee. Since then he has so acclimatized himself to Britain that he has made himself one of our foremost humorists. His speciality is glancing at the foibles that different nations display



ORIEL MALET, who now lives in Paris, won the John Llewellyn Rhys prize with "My Bird Sings." More recently Gollancz published her "Jam Today," an autobiographical *divertissement* about Paris

Oriel Malet—Continued

and brought back a tiny fir-tree, which we decorated with moss and cotton wool, and stars cut out from the silver wrapping round cheese. We successfully made bread, and let it rise on the hearthstone, then ate it in thick slices with cherry jam and cheese and pickles, and it was the most delicious bread I have ever tasted.

In case each night might be Christmas Eve, we sang carols, and lit big fat candles and stood them in all the windows, although nobody could possibly see them.

Naturally we didn't get any Christmas cards, and no turkey or plum pudding; but we had no relations to visit either. And no Boxing Day, with everybody slightly cross, and the day slowly subsiding, like a pricked balloon.

One night, quite late, the snow stopped, and there were stars in the sky once again. We opened the door wide, and heard bells coming up the valley. Getting out skis and the sled we sped down to the village over the new snow, and crowded into the church, which was very hot and bright, and smelt of candles, and singeing pine branches, apples and incense, and too well wrapped up human beings. The villagers all had candles in their hands, and they stared at us, but the stares were friendly, and presently turned into smiles, because it was Christmas Eve. There, too, were the familiar Ox and Ass, St. Joseph in his brown dressing-gown, and the Virgin looking peacefully at her Child, all different shapes and sizes, chipped here and there from lying in a dark cupboard all the summer. "Just in time—" we murmured to each other, glad not to have missed it after all.

STELLA GIBBONS

THE Christmas of 1905 was shadowed for me, then aged three, by the presence of Ada, my nurse.

My father was still a poor man (I don't mean that he ever became a rich one, but the introduction of Lloyd George's National Health Insurance Act did later provide him with a more or less settled income) but a doctor had to afford some domestic service in order to keep up appearances. Ada may have disliked being a sacrifice to the conventions at some thirty pounds a year. Anyway, she was horrid to me and I was afraid to tell.

As Christmas drew near I became aware that something nice was going to happen and one day my mother asked me what I would choose to have on Christmas Day if I might have anything in the world. I answered without hesitation, "Twelve fairy dolls."

Ours was a household that celebrated Christmas without referring to anyone's Birthday, and our tree was always crowned, not with a star, but with a Fairy Doll, dressed in silver and white and suspended from the topmost branch.

I can remember now how dark that Christmas morning seemed to me because of Ada. She dressed me, with the usual hair-tweaking and pinching and, worst of all, frightening stories that would haunt me for the rest of the day, and although it is fifty-one years ago I can see her cross, pale, full face, at the top of what seemed to me an immensely tall column of black frock and white apron, as if I had seen her yesterday.

After breakfast my mother, evidently wanting to hear me make again the impossible request for the twelve fairy dolls, took me in her arms and asked me what I wanted for Christmas. I answered in a whisper: "Ada to go away."

Questions and their reluctant answers followed, and then I was told by both parents that Ada should go away and never come back again. And I can remember the sheer rapture I felt, and the lightening of the air, and the relief, and then I do not recall anything else until it is evening, and I am being taken into the shabby room next to the surgery where the tree is: I look up at the immense dark sweeping branches that seem to tower up to the very ceiling, and there they are: sitting all white and glittering amidst the spicy-smelling boughs: the Twelve Fairy Dolls, with peachy wax faces and lovely fair manes of hair and stiff white dresses wreathed with silver. I wasn't allowed to keep them: they went to little girls in the practice even poorer than I was, but oh, the delight of them, the splendour, the absence of Ada, the blissfulness—and I suppose they cost sixpence each and their muslin robes sold at a penny the yard. Happy Christmas of the Twelve Fairy Dolls—dear Mother.



Mark Ger...

STELLA GIBBONS worked for ten years in Fleet Street at jobs ranging from decoding press cables to dramatic criticisms. But her fame rests on her novels and on, in particular, the uproarious bucolic satire of "Cold Comfort Farm"

GEORGE MIKES

WITHOUT a moment's hesitation I can declare that the Christmas of 1939 was the most memorable in my life. And the reason for this is that I was pleased not to find myself in prison that Christmas Day although I rather expected to. It was my first Christmas on English soil and it is gratifying not to find yourself in prison on your first Christmas in a new country.

I was not expecting any gifts, at most perhaps a book or a glass of wine from one friend or another. So I was greatly surprised when on December 24 three postmen carried in a huge case addressed to me. The case had come from Czechoslovakia. I hardly knew a soul in that country, certainly no one likely to send me such an impressive Christmas gift. I had a further surprise when, after working for half an hour on it with pincers, I opened the huge case and found it full of second-hand clothing. There was no accompanying note among the trousers and worn-out jackets and the name of the sender was illegible.

I was standing there scratching my head over that mountain of second-hand clothing, when a man with whom I had a nodding acquaintance dashed into my flat and asked me

[Continued on page 57]





CHRISTMAS FARE OVER EIGHTY YEARS

ANDRE SIMON, the Grand Old Man of Gastronomy, looks forward to his eighty-first Christmas dinner which promises to be memorable



Drawings by
Hans Schwarz

LOOKING back—which is where age can still score over youth—there never was in the course of my long life any happier Christmas than the Christmas of 1918. It was my first Christmas at home in five years: the war had at long last been won, the war to end all wars! And here were our five happy bairns—from six to sixteen—sitting up to table, healthy and hungry: there was a huge turkey for me to carve and a large ham in front of my wife at the other end of the table; and the crescendo of babbling and laughing rising until the entry of the Christmas pudding ablaze in the darkened room. We both, my wife and I, felt sure that all gloomy days were behind us and that we would have lots of grandchildren to keep us young in our old age. But it was not to be. Next Christmas we are not likely to have more than one guest, a son who has no home of his own at present. We shall not want a turkey nor a sirloin of beef for three, but we shall have, I trust, a meal which will be a very nice Christmas dinner all the same *pour trois*:

THE FARE

Soupe à l'Oignon Savoyarde
Le Pâté de la Comtesse de Preux
Filets Mignons poêlés
Champignons à la Crème
Salade Lorette
Cheshire Cheese
Cox's Orange Pippins
Café

THE WINES

Château Margaux 1950
Château Latour 1929
Rebello Valente 1900

If we are to cut down to a minimum the time spent in the kitchen on Christmas Day, an onion soup is a good choice as it can be made the day before and it will be just as good "hotted up" the next day. It is a good foundation anyway but there must not be too much of it: a small helping will be helpful but let it be small. The Comtesse de Preux's Pâté is a most tasty game confection, somewhat extravagant but that is permissible at Christmastide. Made a week ahead, it will be in perfect condition on The Day. The recipe is given by Barbara Worsley-Gough in her recently published book *Cooking Ahead* (Faber, 1957).

THE 1950 Château Margaux may be better some day when it is older, but it should partner the *pâté* admirably; it possesses the charm of breed and youth and it will introduce most graciously the second claret, a wine of equally aristocratic lineage but of a better as well as a much older vintage—a wine now at the top of its form and a really great claret. It deserves, and it will have, an admirable partner, a tender and rather underdone fillet of beef, plainly pan-broiled, served with creamed mushrooms and no sprouts, spinach, peas and beans, or any other vegetables—not even potatoes. A few leaves of corn salad with a few sticks of uncooked celery, lightly dressed, will add just a touch of freshness, and the Latour is not likely to mind it in the least. I know that there are finicky people who would call it sacrilege to serve a dressed salad with a great Claret, but I am not one of them, and they are always at liberty to finish the wine before they have the salad. Some may also think that it is right and proper to have the cheese first and the fruit next, but I find that the nutty flavour of the Coxes blends perfectly with that of a good, ripe but not over-ripe Cheshire cheese; I like them together, and both are sure to welcome the port.

I AM looking forward to the last bottle of 1900 which we shall have for our Christmas dinner, not only because of its own excellence as a wine, but also because it came from the cellar of an old friend of mine who, like most of my old friends, has now left us—Sir Francis Colchester-Wemyss. When he died, a few years ago, his son Frank wrote to me to say that his brother and himself knew how much their father had enjoyed drinking and talking wine when I stayed with him every year for a couple of days, as I did for many years, and since he would no longer be able to welcome me to Cheltenham they were sending me a dozen bottles of the wine which he would have been so happy to give me himself. This was a very charming thought, indeed.

[Continued on page 58]



Reginald Eyre

The storied foundations of the Christmas table

MELLOW wines, a plump turkey precisely browned, bland, cool fruit: with these as keystones no Christmas dinner can fail, while the picture they compose is in itself a sufficient aperitif. And to the younger members of the party, whom repletion so unaccountably fills not with sloth but energy, the lurking coconut offers an irresistible challenge. Remember, too, that this is the one night of the year when candles are imperative

HOLIDAY FUN IN BRUEGHEL'S DAY

PETER BRUEGHEL'S name stands as high today as it has ever stood. He has always held a niche of some merit, even if at the turn of the century he should have been relegated to the ranks of peasant-painter.

He possessed an abiding love of life and nature which supplied an imperative creative force for his work. At thirty his style was formed; he was a mature artist and with his stocky figures were a recognizable trait. "Die Kinderspiele" (Children's Games, right), painted at this time, 1560, yet only nine years before his death, admirably represents the lighter, less symbol-filled side of his work. In this bustling, yet not crowded, canvas the organization and movement are splendidly controlled. The countless episodes of children fighting, juggling, acting as soldiers, playing bowls, rolling hoops, all retain individual characteristics integrated though they are with unerring harmony into the wonderful design.

The composition is such that while the figures themselves provide no perspective, since their positions within the framework are more after the fashion of medieval tapestry arrangements, the buildings, trees and fencing around which the swarming figures are placed are bold receding diagonals giving any necessary depth. This third dimensional effect is given added force by the skilful use of bold colours; with a more neutral blue tint where a sense of distance is being conveyed.





Beef for CHRISTMAS

LEO BRUCE is a name that stands high in the estimation of readers of the cheerier kind of detective fiction. Here his inestimable Sergeant Beef solves a mystery which cast shadows over the festive season

Illustrated by Leslie Wood

"DOING anything for Christmas?"

The question which was put to me by my old friend Sergeant Beef was altogether too casual. I knew his ponderous attempts at subtlety better than to be deceived by it. He had, I guessed, what he would call "something up his sleeve."

"Yes, I'm booked up," I lied. I was determined to draw him out.

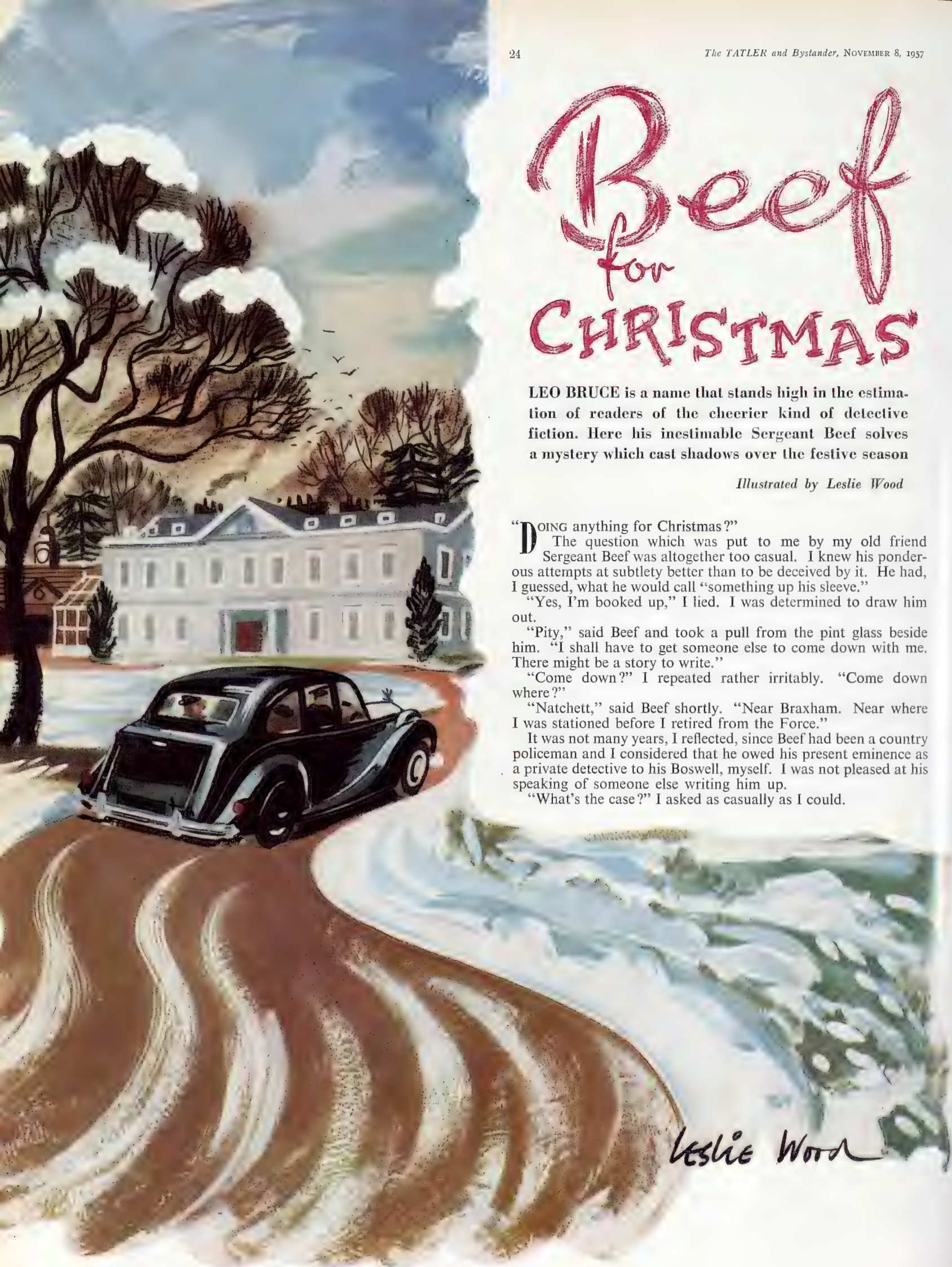
"Pity," said Beef and took a pull from the pint glass beside him. "I shall have to get someone else to come down with me. There might be a story to write."

"Come down?" I repeated rather irritably. "Come down where?"

"Natchett," said Beef shortly. "Near Braxham. Near where I was stationed before I retired from the Force."

It was not many years, I reflected, since Beef had been a country policeman and I considered that he owed his present eminence as a private detective to his Boswell, myself. I was not pleased at his speaking of someone else writing him up.

"What's the case?" I asked as casually as I could.



Leslie Wood

"You're booked up," sulked Beef. "It can't interest you." Then he gave his good-natured grin and added—"Still, I don't mind telling you what it is."

I looked at his raw red face and straggling ginger moustache and wondered for the hundredth time how anyone as ingenuous as Beef could match his wits against the subtle brains of clever criminals and defeat them. Sometimes he was almost boyish.

"Ever heard of a man called Merton Watlow? You haven't? Well, you might not have. He's one of the richest men in the country. Or rather he was."

"Taxation?" I asked, ready to sympathize.

"Not so much that as just hard spending of his capital. Surprising what you can do in that line today. Time was when a millionaire couldn't make himself much poorer. This Merton Watlow says you can't take it with you and he's making it fly like fury. He spends a couple of Prime Ministers' salaries on keeping up his home at Natchett, and he's got other places. If you have an indoor staff of eight and half a dozen gardeners nowadays, you *can* only do it on capital."

"Well?" I asked impatiently.

"His family don't like it," said Beef. "Natural enough, I suppose. They want a bit left for them. They mean to live a lot longer than one another. Who doesn't? They think the old man ought to live on his interest for their benefit, and they've told him so. That only makes him worse. It's become a sort of race. You should see the pictures he buys."

"How do you know all this?"

"He has consulted me," said Beef rather grandly. "He's been getting anonymous letters lately threatening to do for him if he doesn't stop spending like this. They only make him worse. But he wants me to find out about them."

"I see. But why Christmas?"

"Because he always invites his relatives at Christmas. Gets a kick out of bringing them down to Natchett Grange and letting them see him spend a hundred or two on a Christmas party. The very presents he gives them turn them sour when they think what they must have cost him. Silly things, he chooses, hell of a price and no use to them. I shouldn't be surprised if one of them really did do for him one day. They certainly hate him enough."

"Isn't he afraid of that?"

Not likely. He's a big man, powerful, active and tough. He's sixty but as fit as a flea and been round the world a dozen times. He doesn't seem afraid of anything."

"Then what does he want us for?"

Me, he wants. He hasn't said anything about you. He wants me to find out who's threatening him. Just to satisfy his curiosity, he says. He tells me it's no more than a joke to him, but his secretary, a man called Philip Meece, has nearly been driven out of his mind by it. So I'm going to spend Christmas at Natchett."

"I'll come with you," I said.

Beef nodded without answering, but his grin told me that he regarded this as surrender. As I recall now that Christmas at Natchett with its one very horrible moment and its whole bizarre meaning, I am not sure that he was not right.

"It's sending a car for us," Beef said on December 23, the day we were due at Natchett, and I soon found that it was an understatement. A Rolls Royce drew up at the door of Beef's modest house in Lilac Crescent, and I was startled to see not only a chauffeur in uniform, but beside him that anachronistic figure a footman dressed in similar clothes. He came to the door, took our bags and opened the door of the large car for us. We started on our slow way out of town.

But it was when we came to Natchett Grange that I began to have a sense of unreality. Could there be such houses in England in these mid-century years? It was a clear day and we saw at once the great grounds and gardens planned by some modern Capability Brown, the conservatories looming up like those in Kew Gardens and the stables and dairy all manned and busy. The estate would have been ducal in the last century, today it was almost incredible.

Rumbold, the butler, opened the front door, a tall man as aloof and unsmiling as a statue. He showed us to the library and I had time to see that Merton Watlow was a bibliophile and to guess that his collection was beyond price.

"Wonder if he's read all these," said Beef, chuckling crudely.

Before I answered a small pale man in his forties came in.

"My name's Meece," he said when he had greeted us. "I'm

[Continued overleaf]





Merton Watlow's secretary. He'll be down in a minute."

I was about to start some general conversation in a normal polite way when Beef with his usual lack of *savoir faire* came out with a clumsy question.

"Now what's all this about anonymous letters?" he asked.

"Oh that," said Philip Meece indifferently. "You must ask Mr. Watlow about that. Not my pigeon."

"Seen any of them?" persisted Beef.

"Mr. Watlow likes to open his own correspondence. He only shows me what he wants me to deal with."

THE door opened. It was not the spendthrift millionaire who entered but a large handsome woman rather lavishly dressed and wearing several pieces of jewellery. I did not know enough of such things to be able to say whether they were genuine.

"My wife," said Philip Meece unexpectedly. "Sergeant Beef and Mr. Towser."

"Townsend," I corrected rather crossly as I bowed to Mrs. Meece. After all, my name should have been as well known as Beef's.

I could hear Beef breathing heavily as was his wont in the presence of women of this kind—fine dignified women who awed him.

This time I was determined to lead the conversation into pleasant and conventional channels.

"We've had a delightful drive down," I began. "The countryside. . ."

But I could say no more for we all turned to face Merton Watlow. He was, as Beef had said, a large man and the years had done little to reduce the solid weight of his shoulders. He gave an impression of forcefulness of both character and physique. I suppose he would be called a handsome man though I found his taurine strength and imperious manner a little overwhelming.

He gave me the merest suggestion of a nod and at once began to talk to Beef whom he treated in a man-to-man way.

"You'll meet them all at dinner tonight," he said. "There are six whom I've thought it worth while to invite. I want this ridiculous business cleared up by Boxing Day."

"We'll see what we can do," said Beef in his most phlegmatic manner. I wished he would show more alertness and more appreciation of the privilege of being chosen by Merton Watlow for this task.

IT was at this point that I felt bound to remonstrate secretly with Beef for he was staring at Freda Meece and particularly, seemed to notice, at her jewellery in a way that must have been embarrassing to her. I drew him aside as though to ask for light.

"Beef," I whispered. "Don't stare."

He ignored me and turned again to Watlow.

"First of all I want to see some of these anonymous letters. Nasty things, I always say. I remember in one village. . ."

"I'm afraid you won't be able to see them. I've never bothered to keep one."

"Silly of you, that was. We could have got handwriting experts on to it."

"They were typewritten."

"Better still. You'd be surprised how easy it is to say what comes from what typewriter. However, if they're gone they're gone and that's all there is to it. Now who have we got?"

"My guests, you mean? I am a bachelor, as you know, so my kindred consists of the families of my brother and sister, both of whom are dead. First there is my nephew, Major Alec Watlow."

To my embarrassment Beef here produced his bulky black notebook and began slowly to write with a stump of pencil.

"There is Alec's wife Prudence, a rather anaemic woman I find, and in contrast a noisy athletic daughter called Mollie."

"Ah," said Beef.

"There is my sister's daughter with her husband, a Doctor Siddley, and their son Egbert, whom I regard as being practically feeble-minded though his parents do not share the opinion. That is all."

I was relieved to see that Beef's arduous note-taking was finished, but his next question turned me cold.

"They all hope to come into a bit if they live longer than you, I take it? That's if there's any left, of course."

Merton Watlow did not seem to take this amiss, indeed he smiled faintly as he said, "That is so."

"One other point," said Beef. "What about the staff?" His

voice dropped to a hoarse but perfectly audible whisper as he indicated Philip and Freda Meece across the room. "These, for instance?"

Watlow hesitated.

"I suppose you must consider everyone as possible, though I must say in this case I find it rather absurd. Philip has been with me for ten years, Rumbold a little more and most of the servants for some considerable time. It is up to you to include them or not."

Beef put his notebook away.

"Leave it to me," he said.

In a way he was justified in this. He did find a solution to the whole thing which, I am now convinced, was the right one. But it did not save a human life.

DINNER that night was a preposterous affair.

"My cook has a collection of old menus," explained Merton Watlow, "and he has discovered one of just sixty-three years ago, that is of the year in which I was born. It is the dinner offered by Queen Victoria to her guests at Osborne on December 19, 1894. He has insisted on reproducing it. I think you will see that our Victorian forebears enjoyed their food in quantity."

How right he was! That interminable meal returns to me in nightmares. There were six courses and for most dishes there was an alternative scarcely less satisfying. We were handed cards on which the original menu was reproduced. POTAGE, I read without apprehension at first, *à la Tête de Veau Clair* or *à la Cressy*. POISSONS, *Les Tranches de Saumon*, *Les Soles à la Colbert*. Phew, I thought, and found as an ENTREE *les Pains de Faisans à la Milanaise*. Then there was that course which has long vanished, the RELEVÉ. It was in English, but none the less menacing for that—Roast Beef, Yorkshire Pudding. The ROTI was *Dinde à la Chipota* or *Chine of Pork*. ENTREMETS were four—*Les Asperges à la Sauce*, Mince Pies, Plum Pudding, *La Gelée d'Oranges à l'Anglaise*.

But Merton Watlow did not finish with his relatives there. As though to give his gastronomic teasing of them an extra sting there was added the extraordinary heading SIDE TABLE. Under it were offered Baron of Beef, Wild Boar's Head, Game Pie, Brawn, Woodcock Pie and *Terrine de Foie Gras*.

Only two persons of those at the long table viewed this monstrous catalogue with anything but repressed horror, they were Beef and Mollie Watlow, the hoydenish daughter of the millionaire's nephew, Major Alec. His wife, described by Watlow as anaemic, now looked positively seasick. Of the others at the table the Major, a stiff muscular man with clipped hair and speech, masticated in silent disapproval while Dr. Siddley, a gaunt but garrulous man, sat talking studiously of any subject but food. His son Egbert, a flaccid giant, seemed only half aware of what was taking place. His mother, thickset and hairy, reminded me of the old saying, "If looks could kill" as she stared at Merton Watlow. The Meecees also dined with us and I noticed that Freda Meece no longer wore diamonds.

"Shouldn't have thought it was possible to lay hands on grub like this," remarked Beef, earning curious glances from more refined guests. "Not in England today."

He was speaking across Prudence Watlow to his host.

"Oh yes," said Merton Watlow. "You can get anything if you're prepared to spend the money."

This remark, made in a normal voice but perfectly audible to everyone in the room, caused what is called a pregnant silence.

BEFORE the end of Christmas Eve, I had come to know Merton Watlow's relatives quite well. Although I was not without sentiments of sympathy for them and realized how they were being tormented by Watlow's fabulous and deliberate extravagance in everything he did, yet I must own that there was not one of them who did not seem to me capable of murder.

They were not aimiable people and if we had all come down for a jolly Christmas party the occasion would have been a failure. Beef at any rate had other things in mind and I as his chronicler watched and waited for something which would show which way his suspicions were going.

The grinding voice of Dr. Siddley condemning the National Health Scheme, the noisy movements and halloos of Mollie Watlow, the stern silences and perpetual newspaper reading of her father, the pained whine of Prudence Watlow, the mooning presence of Egbert and the ferocious resentfulness of Mrs.

Siddley were none of them charming qualities but in the curious circumstances I was interested in them all.

Beef, however, with a sense of fitness rare in him, seemed to leave the study of these people to me and concentrate on the servants. He would disappear with Rumbold and return wiping his moustache and telling me that it had been very interesting.

Early on the morning of Christmas Eve the only member of the party whom I found in the least *sympathique* left us, for Freda Meece was to spend Christmas Day with her parents. I felt some disappointment at this, but was consoled by the confidence that the evening would almost certainly bring surprises and perhaps some incident which would be revealing to a criminologist like myself. I was not to be disappointed in this. But how very much more lurid than I supposed the incident turned out to be.

It was on Christmas Eve that Merton Watlow was accustomed to giving his relatives what he called "a little surprise." There would be some entertainment or extravaganza which, ostensibly designed for their amusement, in fact demonstrated Watlow's gift of squandering money. One year, Mrs. Siddley hissed in my ear, he had taken them to the largest conservatory where he had collected all the items of the old Christmas ballad including six turtle doves and a partridge in a pear tree. Another time he had engaged and smuggled into the house the entire cast of a musical comedy only a few days before it opened in London.

"THIS year," she added, "I believe he has got Raymond Gidley."

"Impossible!" I cried, for she had named television's most popular figure, the fabulous artist who not only played Mendelssohn in a highly individualistic manner but sang his own ballads in a falsetto voice and gave advice on family problems after dramatic re-enactments of them.

"Not to Merton. You heard what he said to your friend last night? There is nothing you can't buy with enough money. Merton has enough—still. How much longer he will have is another matter."

Dinner that evening was scarcely less exhausting than that of the night before. Beef became embarrassingly jovial and I watched him with growing anxiety swallow glass after glass.

Philip Meece, I noticed, was absent.

"Philip's a bit under the weather," said Watlow equably. "I think he has turned in."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Dr. Siddley. "Would you like me to have a look at him?"

"Very good of you, Stanley. He's probably asleep now. But if you'd like to look in before you go to bed I'm sure he'd be grateful. It's the first bedroom at the top of the stairs—over the drawing-room. I daresay it's over-eating."

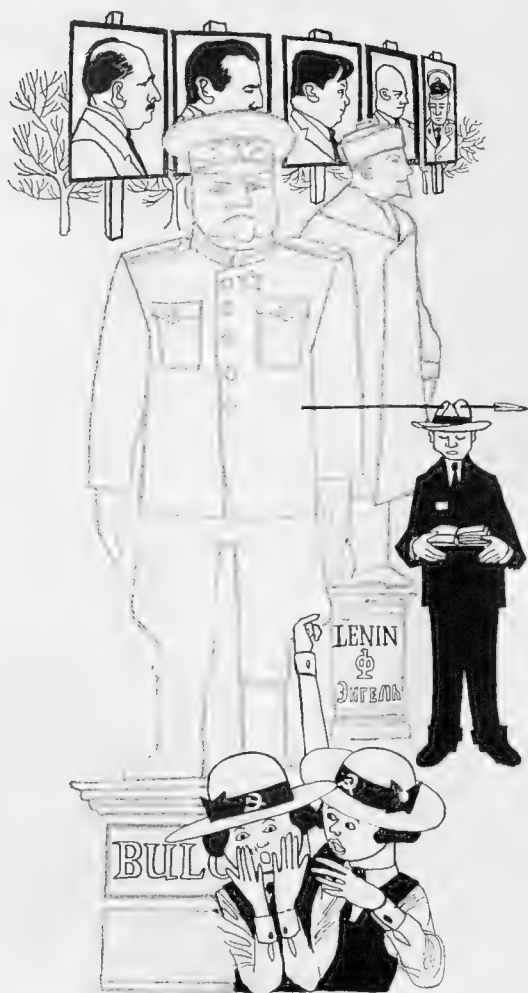
"I'm not surprised," moaned Mrs. Watlow. "I wonder the

Continued on page 60





THE SIXTH FORM AT ST. ENGELS



LORNA WOOD assumes the mantle of Angela Brazil, and shows that a firm jaw, a steady eye and a straight hockey stick may flourish even in a strange ideological climate. The illustrations are by R. Hoyte

OUT in the snow-blanketed school quad it was peaceful, except for the howling of wolves in the distance and the voices of the Cultural Contacts Society coming from the Assembly Hall. They were singing a free translation of an old English song. . . .

"Bad King Wenceslas looked stout,
In the festive season.
All the workers did without
Or were tried for treason. . . ."

Dasha, the head girl, hummed the haunting refrain to herself, as she stood watching her friend Masha at javelin practice.

"Sadly groaned the serfs each night,
Short of food and fuel—
All agreed, as well they might,
Life was something cruel. . . ."

Suddenly she gave a warning whistle.
"Crumbs! Now you've bought it!"

For Masha had over-fulfilled her norm and her weapon was speeding, straight as the Party line, for Comrade Diabolov, the new tutor in pest control.

"Oblast!" wailed Masha, "Now we're for the virgin lands!"

The two chums ducked behind a statue of Bulganin and awaited developments.

"It'll be pretty ropy in Siberia, I expect," muttered Dasha, "All soil reclamation and no tuck."

Masha shrugged her shoulders gloomily.

"I shall own up and face the balalaikas," she said. "Then we at least may have a stable peace and a genuine relaxation of tension."

Dasha peeped round Bulganin's trouser-leg.

"I say, you do have luck! It's gone right through his hat but he's still deep in his Michurin. That reminds me, we are slackers. I haven't learnt my Lenin and you've got a whole heap of Marx."

Masha shook her head.

"Not tonight. It's my turn to sit at the samovar in the Junior House and read *Das Kapital* aloud."

Dasha snorted contemptuously.

"THE way those kids are spoon-fed is the absolute end. We came up the hard way, though of course in an atmosphere of Socialist security, free from the terror of unemployment."

"That's just it," said Masha wistfully, "They like a bit of unemployment. They're sweet kids but they're awfully one-idea'd. They nearly all talk about going to Moscow some day but there's one who seems to have cherry orchards on the brain. She's probably keen on agriculture, but it's jolly monotonous to have to listen."

"Wait until the Stakhanovites get at them. I say, Masha! Do you see what I see?"

Through the driving flakes they made out a ladder leaning against the dormitory windowsill and somebody climbing down it. It was Pasha, the naughtiest girl in the school.

"Too much *Romeo and Juliet*. Someone gave her tickets for the Bolshoi, last hols. And she could just as well go out by the door. I always said she was a deviationist."

"She'll catch her death of cold, she's wearing her red sarafan and I bet you anything you like she's put a drop of 'Kremlin' behind her ears. Let's hide behind the Lenin statue and keep an eye on her."

"No, the Khrushchev one, it's much safer. Listen!"

For somebody on the other side of the hedge was singing "Stenka Razin."

"That's Mikhail Mikhailov," breathed Masha, turning pink, "He's going to sing that at a concert to be given by the Harvester Combine Operators' Song and Dance Ensemble."

Dasha stared at her.

"YOU mustn't get mushy over Mischa, Masha. He's the reason why Pasha's wearing her red sarafan. Look, she's putting the ladder away in the toolshed. Let's ambush her."

They slipped through the hedge. There, by the snow statue of Malenkov he had made while he was waiting, sat Mikhail Mikhailov, surrounded by newspaper parcels. They saw him take some black bread out of *Pravda*, unroll an onion from

Izvestia and begin to read *Trud* with his lunch. Masha's bosom rose and fell with emotion. She could not help admiring the methodical way his beautiful white teeth did their work—his jaws, she thought, with the dreamy sensitiveness of a young girl, moved as rhythmically as the machinery of the new cement-mixer in her Urals hometown.

"Dasha, do admit he's gorgeous! As soon as I lay eyes on him he drives the directives of the Sixth Five Year Plan straight out of my head!"

Dasha shook her head gravely, but before she could say anything about the honour of the school, Pasha reappeared. She forced her way through the hedge but Dasha grabbed her by the shoulder.

"What are you up to, you clot? You know jolly well you ought to be at hockey practice. You can't have forgotten the match with Omsk Ladies, next week!"

Pasha tossed her head. Her lower lip quivered but as she had been a foundation-pupil of St. Engels, the upper one was stiff.

"Leave me alone, Dasha, I'm going to leave this beastly place and elope with Mikhail Mikhailov."

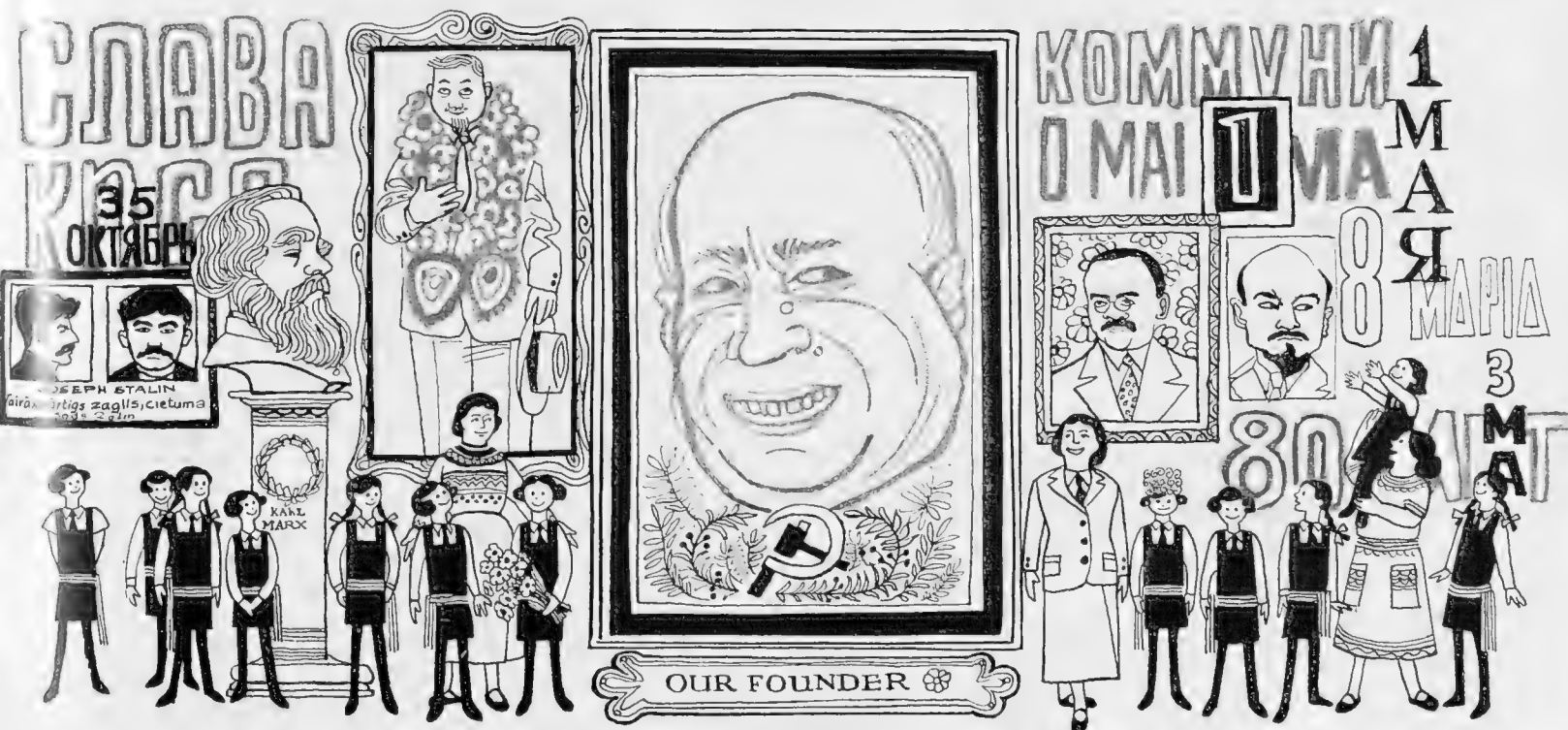
"YOU'LL be miserable," warned Dasha (Masha lay weeping in a snowdrift.) "I suppose you realize you'll have to finish your studies at a correspondence school, know all about harvester combines and put up with the smell of onions. And you'll never get the chance to play against Omsk Ladies again. Think of world public opinion and your new sable gym-slip and leave *Romeo and Juliet* to Ulanova."

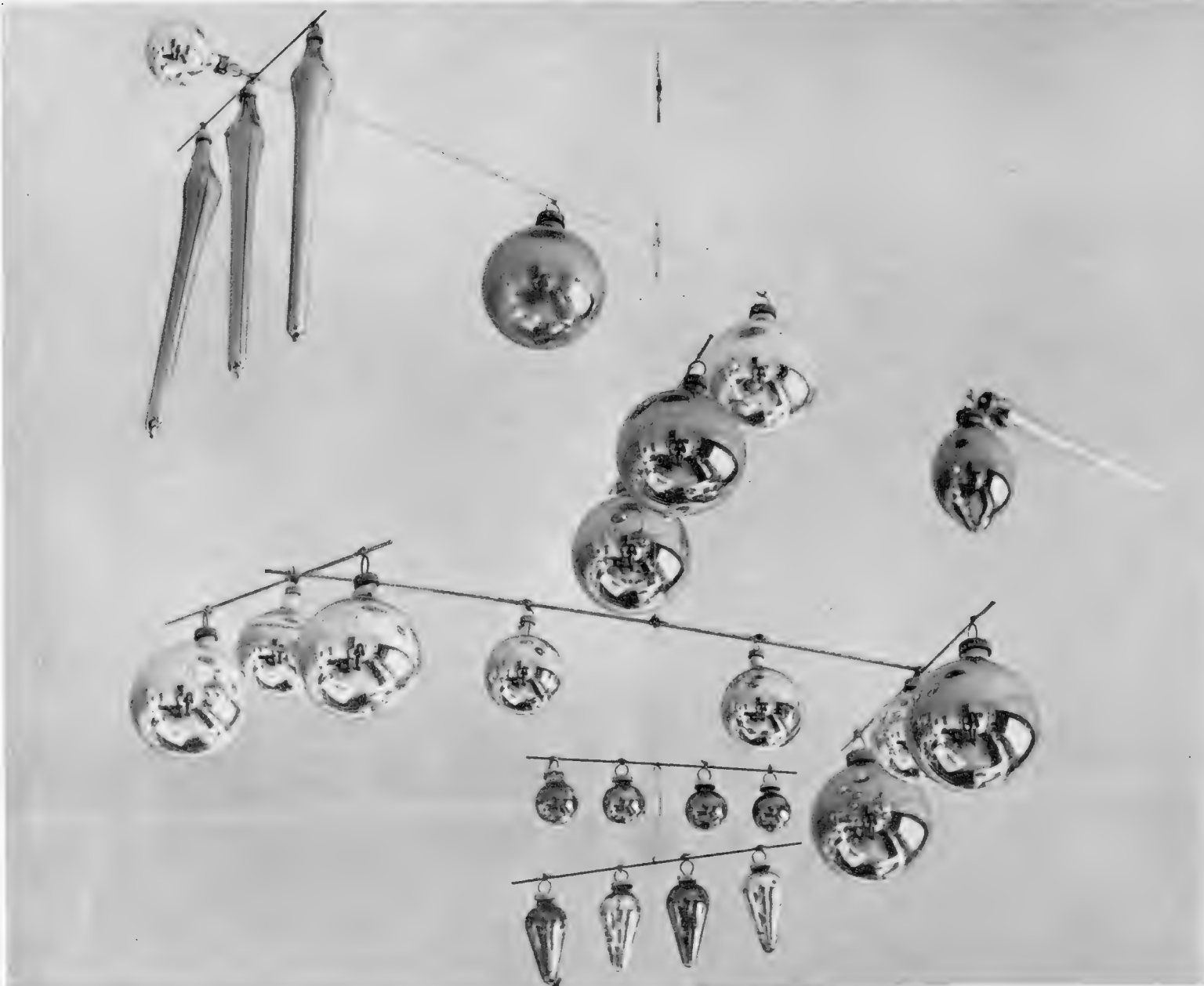
Pasha burst into wild laughter and beat the trunk of a birch-tree with her fists. The noise frightened the ptarmigans, which flew off with cries of alarm. Her companions looked at her with mingled disgust and compassion. Small avalanches were set in motion from the heavily laden branches. Nearly half a pound of snow fell on her but she did not notice.

"Of course I'll be miserable. All day in the fields and the factory, and all night on top of the stove, I shall remember that I might have played centre-forward. When I am a grandmother, I shall take my gym-slip out of the mothballs and put it on for the little ones to see. 'Babushka,' they will say, 'what unforgettable goals you might have scored!' Ah, Dasha, you don't understand my feelings any more than I do, but I must go. My soul is torn—"

"So is your sarafan, you mouldy reactionary! It caught on the ladder."

"Pashenka!" called Mikhail Mikhailov. He rose to his feet. Staring at Dasha with strange intensity, he unwrapped a revolver from last week's *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. "Let us play roulette," he suggested. . . .





THE DONNA DESIGNS A CHRISTMAS MOBILE

GNADÉ GRAY, who writes this article, makes delightfully lighthearted mobiles to decorate her country house at Christmas time. The mobile is a comparatively new art form, and the first in the style with which we are familiar was made in the early 1930s by the American sculptor, Alexander Calder

SNOW crystals airily floating in space or gaily coloured glass Christmas tree balls twisting and turning and changing their pattern and colour relationships, can give us a delightfully contemporary interpretation of the traditional method of decorating our homes at Christmas.

Mobiles are created for the pleasure we take in movement, and depend upon balance for their construction—not only on the mechanical balance of weight, but on the balance of shape, colour and texture measured by the eye. In spite of all this they are not difficult to make, if you have patience and ingenuity; they can be and have been made of an endless variety of materials, from sheet metal and cardboard to fir cones, sea shells or even driftwood.

To make a mobile you will need these tools and materials: a pair of round-nosed pliers which also cut wire, some 14- and 16-gauge wire, a tube of glue (some of the modern synthetic glues are very good because they are quick drying, and not messy to work with), an awl for making holes and a sharp knife for cutting out cardboard shapes if you intend to use cardboard; and such elements as you decide to use to

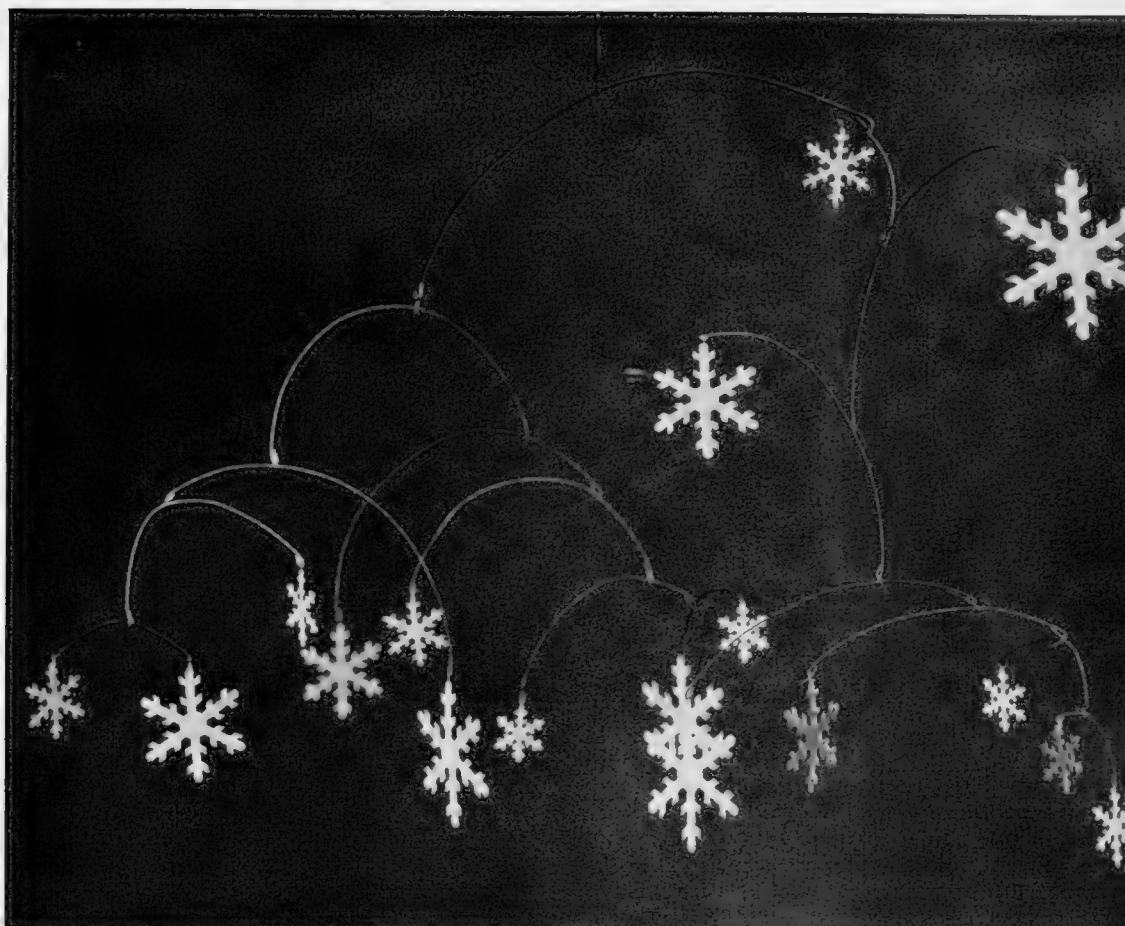
make up your mobile. But, of course, for a Christmas decoration which you will take down on Twelfth Night, it is unnecessary to use very permanent materials or methods of construction, and the top illustrations show two simple versions which are easily assembled.

To make the first, you cut a piece of wire for the lowest arm, to which you attach your bottom decorative shapes. You then hold the wire very gently with your pliers to find the point of balance; when this is found, attach a nylon thread at this point to hold this arm to the next about it.

You will need something on which to hang the units of your mobile as you construct them step by step. A simple method is to project from a table a narrow board weighted at the table end with books, and tie your units as you assemble them to a nail in the end of the board.

The mobile in the first illustration is made in this way from straight pieces of 14-gauge wire from which the glass balls in various sizes are tied with nylon thread fixed with a dab of glue on each knot.

In this mobile the wire is curved and small loops are made at each end. The snow crystals are cut in various sizes from white cardboard which are thinly painted with gum and sprinkled with frosting. A small hole is pierced in the top of each crystal and they are tied with nylon to the loops



Photographs by Barry Swaab

The cage full of coloured glass birds (below) is made from two circles of plywood held together at the centre with a half-inch dowel. Holes are drilled in the plywood to hold thinner dowels which form the bars of the cage. Branches of larch painted white are fastened to the centre dowel with Scotch tape. The cage is painted white, the pine cones on the top in gold and the whole thing hangs from a brass curtain ring



With a half-inch dowel, two foot six inches long, some 12-gauge wire, Christmas tree candle-holders and a wire plant pot-holder all painted shiny black and decorated with gold leaves, you can make a candelabra on the "Partridge In A Pear Tree" song theme

THE CHILDREN'S FAVOURITE GUEST

by the Bishop of Coventry

ONCE again, the familiar figure of Father Christmas is to be seen outside the big stores of our cities. In his traditional red robes and snowy hair he is beginning to thrill the countless small children who have not yet had their beliefs rudely shattered by older brothers and sisters.

Very few people have any notion about his origin or about the reason why he has come to be such a deeply loved figure in our national life. The familiar figure of Father Christmas has a long family history and some of his ancestors had, originally, no connection with our Christian Festival. He seems, for instance, to have inherited some of the attributes of the heathen god Woden, particularly that of driving through the sky at night. Some of the festivals with which we surround him are certainly derived from old pagan customs, when, at the beginning of winter, animals which could not be fed through the winter were slaughtered and eaten, with great feasting and rejoicing.

The main Christian ancestor of Father Christmas is, undoubtedly, St. Nicholas, who has been called "the children's saint," from the many stories told of his gentleness and of his miracles performed on behalf of children. Unfortunately, scarcely anything about St. Nicholas seems historically certain, except that he was Bishop of Myra, in Lycia, in the fourth century.

HE is said to have been tortured and imprisoned for his faith by the Emperor Diocletian, and subsequently released. But beyond these meagre records a rich variety of stories and miracles are told of him, which have, no doubt, helped to make him one of the most popular of Christian saints.

Two of the best known of these stories concern children or young people. In one of them, three boys were on their way to school in Athens when they stopped at Myra for the night. There was a famine at the time and a wicked innkeeper, who had nothing else to offer his guests, murdered the boys, cut up their bodies and threw them into a pickling tub with some pork. St. Nicholas had a vision of the whole affair and went to the inn, where the innkeeper confessed and the Bishop restored the three boys to life. When St. Nicholas is represented in art, he is usually shown in episcopal vestments standing by the three boys in a tub.

This story no doubt explains why St. Nicholas was adopted as the patron saint of boys, and why his day, December 6, was chosen for the old ceremony of the election of the "Boy Bishop."

IN most cathedrals and many parishes and grammar schools, the choristers or scholars chose one of their number to act as "Bishop" from December 6 to Holy Innocents' Day, December 28. He was dressed in full episcopal splendour, chose his attendant "clergy" from among the other children, and celebrated all but the most sacred of the church services. He was even expected to preach a sermon on Holy Innocents' Day. Processions were held through the streets and substantial contributions were made to the "Bishop" by the householders. Strange as the custom may seem to us, it was apparently carried out quite reverently, at least in medieval times, but it was finally forbidden in 1542 by Henry VIII.

Another kindly action attributed to St. Nicholas is the story of his gifts to the three daughters of a nobleman. Their father had no money for their dowries, and so was about to sell them into prostitution, but St. Nicholas heard of it and secretly dropped

three gifts of money through the windows of the house at night, to save them from this fate. The three golden balls of the pawnbroker are said, perhaps a little incongruously, to have been derived from this story, but it certainly is the origin of the custom of giving presents secretly on the Eve of St. Nicholas.

Today the custom is observed much more on the Continent, particularly in South Germany, Switzerland, Austria and the Netherlands, than it is in this country. In Holland, on St. Nicholas' Eve, the saint rides through the town on his white horse, followed by his servant, "Black Peter," and dressed in his episcopal robes. He inquires about the children's behaviour, and that evening the children put out their shoes or stockings, with an offering of hay or a carrot for the saint's horse. If they have been "good," the fodder is gone in the morning and toys are in its place, but if "bad" (in theory, at least!) the fodder will be untouched and the rod will be lying there.

AT this time the shops are full of gifts and confectioners sometimes offer gingerbread or sugar representations of the saint. Similar ceremonies take place in Germany and Austria. Here, in some districts, a man dressed as the saint rides along, asking if the children know their prayers and catechism. If they do they are rewarded with sweet things from his basket; if not, the Bishop points to the hideous monster, "Klaubauf," who is standing behind him with a rod.

The ceremonies in connection with St. Nicholas seem to have come to this country by way of America. The early Dutch colonists took their "San Nicholas" with them to the New World but his name got corrupted gradually until it became our "Santa Claus."

At the same time there seems to have been a deliberate attempt both here and in the Protestant north of Germany, to discourage any honours paid to St. Nicholas and to transfer the ceremonies of his day to the festival of Christmas. Thus, for instance, the custom of hanging up stockings on Christmas Eve derives from the story that the saint, on one of his secret midnight expeditions, climbed a roof to drop a purse down the chimney, where it fell into a stocking hung up to dry.

In this country we now connect our present-giving at Christmas more with our gladness at God's great Gift to us than with the nocturnal charities of St. Nicholas. But it is fitting that we should remember the kindly Bishop at this time of the year, and be grateful for the contribution made by the "children's saint" to the rich variety of our Christmas celebrations.

GUTHBERT COVENTRY—the Bishop of Coventry—is an Old Etonian with the Church in his blood, for his father was the late Canon J. U. N. Bardsley. He was born in 1907 and after going to New College, Oxford, became curate of All Hallows, Barking by the Tower, 1932-34. His war years were spent as the Rector of Woolwich; then in 1944 he became Provost of Southwark Cathedral until 1947 when he was appointed Suffragan Bishop of Croydon. This post he held until he went to Coventry in 1956. He has published *Bishop's Move*. His recreations, when his ecclesiastical duties allow him time, are golf and sketching



ST. NICHOLAS of Bari, a detail from the *Ansidei Madonna* by Raphael (1483-1520). It was painted for the Ansidei family of Perugia and was placed in the Servite Church of St. Siro in 1506. In 1885 it was bought by the Duke of Marlborough from whom it was purchased by the National Gallery by whose courtesy this detail is reproduced



The Crossroads

All routes converge on Christmas. Through a maze
Of mad, goose-giddy, parcel-plodding ways
We weave towards joy, and presently assess
Imprisoned bliss, 'gainst programmed happiness.

Now candle-kindled recollections chase
Each fretful furrow from the old year's face
And, bubble-brief, beyond his smiles we see
The fair lost landscape of felicity.

All routes unite, then variously divide
The convoys on December's tinsel tide
Tugged home, and we another course must chart
Along the New Year highways of the heart.

—Jean Stanger





The tableau depicting the murder of the little Princes in the Tower in 1483

THE OLD LADY OF BAKER STREET

ANDREW HALL, after visiting world famous Madame Tussaud's, became intrigued with the beginnings of this waxwork exhibition. He has traced its story back to pre-Revolutionary Paris

WHEN were you last at Madame Tussaud's? It is, I know, a leading question, getting a shame-faced answer. Did you, in fact, ever venture into the gloom of the Chamber of Horrors, and while there take a peep at the original Revolution Death Masks? Have you then—but, of course, you can't have done, since you won't have visited the Exhibition for forty years—seen the actual clothes worn by John George Haigh? A few hours before his execution the acid-bath murderer bequeathed them to the exhibition, and even left instructions as to how immaculate the finished model should be! Nor then will you have seen the first planetarium to be built in Britain and the Commonwealth. But Madame Tussaud's has it!

But whether you have ever visited the exhibition or not, have you given even the most passing of thoughts to the eighteenth century Frenchwoman who created it? The waxworks of Madame Tussaud's are famous the world over, and films have been made with the exhibition as principal location. Yet its early history, fraught with dangers to its creators, and uncertain as to outcome, is largely unknown. It is here proposed to tell the exciting open chapters of an as yet unfinished story.

PHILIPPE NATHAN CURTIUS was an ambitious young doctor and in order to establish early a considerable reputation in his practice he put every ounce of his strength into the work. The strain was tremendous and late every night the young bachelor would collapse on to his bed, tense, nervous and exhausted. He must relax a little, and find some pastime to replace the evening work. But what to take up? He was interested in nothing but the practice. In the end he compromised.

As a student Curtius had been taught anatomy by means of a number of detailed wax models of various parts of the body. Some of his patients suffered from unusual complaints and he realized quite suddenly that this student teaching method could be useful in treatment and diagnosis. He set about making his own wax models of limbs and organs. In the evenings, however, with the wax left over from the day's work, he amused himself by modelling miniature wax portraits of the local celebrities.

Only a few years later, in the early 1760s, he was both wealthy and famous,



The founder, Madame Tussaud, in 1778

but not as a doctor. Under constant persuasion and praise from friends, and because it was undeniable that his reputation as an artist had by now far surpassed his fame as a doctor, Curtius had set apart a small room of his house and then placed some of his portraits on view to the public.

Not only was the public fascinated and amused, but a cousin of Louis XV, the Prince of Conti, on an unofficial visit, was so impressed that he became Curtius's patron and had the portraits transferred to a larger studio in Paris. By this time Curtius had added his first few life-size models to the collection. Despite his success, however, the wax sculptor missed the warmth brought by family life. To provide himself with such company, he asked his widowed sister and her little five-year-old daughter Marie to come to Paris and look after him.

The child was intelligent and pretty; and it was inevitable that Curtius, who had become attached to Marie, allowed her to play with the wax in his workroom. They spent many happy hours together. She seemed to enjoy the studio as much as any child of that age would, but her uncle soon noticed her marked ability at model making. At first astonished, and then impressed by her uncanny aptitude, he worked hard to develop it. As time passed her skill increased to such an extent that her work began to attract more attention amongst their friends than that of the uncle.

YIELDING, not altogether unwillingly, under gentle but unrelenting pressure from Marie's mother, Curtius entrusted to the girl the first of many commissions for his new museum in 1778. She was then seventeen and had developed into a beautiful and gay young woman, fragile and delicately built. Voltaire, of whom this first model was made, spoke so highly of her that it was not long before Marie's name reached the ears of the French Royal Family.

Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette paid visits to the studio and on one occasion brought Madame Elizabeth, Louis' young sister. The two girls, being the same age, became firm friends, and Elizabeth obtained reluctant consent from Curtius to take Marie into Court life with her—in the capacity of art tutor, secretary and companion. Her future seemed destined to be secure.

Early in 1789 Curtius, with revolution in the air, called Marie back to Paris, and so away from the vulnerable Royal Family. On the morning of Sunday, July 12, placards appeared everywhere in Paris, ordering the citizens to remain indoors. Foreign troops poured into the city. The day was hot and oppressive and the crowds, defying the placards, waited with mounting tension. At noon the news came that Necker, an idol of the populace, had been exiled. Wild with fury the crowd unexpectedly rushed straight to Curtius's house. The family were having lunch and bravely trying to ignore their danger when the leader of the crowd forced his way into the room. He demanded the wax bust of Necker.

With this head born aloft, the crowd paraded the streets outside the Royal Palace, screaming their revenge. But they were soon terribly silenced by a squadron of German cavalry. The bust, smashed and seeming for once to exude red blood, lay in the gutters with their bearers. Forty-eight hours later the Bastille was stormed.

When war with Austria eventually broke out, and with her uncle appointed captain-quartermaster of the French army on the Rhine, Marie closed the museum and transferred the contents to a safer place.

One night in August, a mob of civilians attacked the palace, where the Royal Family had been virtually besieged, but although a garrison of three thousand troops guarded the buildings, the King and Queen had been warned, and at the last moment had fled to safety. The mob, incensed with hatred, pressed on; and under their burning fury the majority of the garrison retreated. The faithful Swiss Guards who remained were massacred to a man.

THREE of Marie's brothers were in this gallant company, and all through the night she sat waiting for news, but hearing only rumours of the horrors enacted around the palace. News of their death reached her next day, but only after she had gone from one mutilated body to another searching for them. Knowing that her own life was in grave danger, but too full of bitterness to care, Marie now entered a period of tragedy and terror. Ironically it was the very skill which had led her life to be endangered that eventually saved her.

[Continued overleaf]

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS.

Magnificent Addition without Extra Charge

MADAME
TUSSAUD & SONS'
EXHIBITION,
Bazaar, Baker Street, Portman Square

THE HALL OF KINGS,
SPLENDID PICTURE GALLERY,
Combination of Sculpture. Paintings, Figures in Wax, brought for the first time in comparison, Decorations of an expensive character, &c., &c.

The most spacious Suite of EXHIBITION ROOMS in Europe
243 feet Long by 48 feet Wide,

Enlarged in honour of Prince Albert, and the expected Visit of Strangers from all parts of the World, to the

EXPOSITION OF 1851,

Many of whom will, no doubt, visit the various sights so creditable to this Metropolis, and at the same time, as a debt of gratitude, on the part of the Messrs. TUSSAUD for the unbounded support their lamented Mother was honoured with in Great Britain, during a period of nearly

FIFTY YEARS.

THE PICTURE GALLERY

Consists of a Collection of Full-length Portraits by Eminent Painters, as a tribute to the Arts, decorated in a Style of Magnificence never before attempted in any Exhibition. They have the happiness and distinguished honour to announce, that it contains the full-length Portrait of **Her Majesty**

QUEEN VICTORIA.

in her Sacerdotal Robes, painted with her Majesty's most Gracious permission, by that eminent Artist Sir GEORGE HAYTER, and is probably one of the finest works of that admired Painter; they have also, the good fortune to possess the full-length portrait of that amiable and popular Prince, from life, in the Splendid Robes of the Garter, for which he gave sittings, His Royal Highness

PRINCE ALBERT!

Painted by PATTEN. The full-length Portrait of His Majesty

GEORGE THE FOURTH!

An Original Picture, painted by Sir THOMAS LAWRENCE, and presented by His Majesty to General NICOLAY.

His MAJESTY WILLIAM IV. from Life, painted by SIMPSON.

His Majesty GEORGE III. in his Coronation Robes and QUEEN CHARLOTTE, from the Collection of the late Queen Dowager, painted by Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

HIS MAJESTY GEORGE II. in HIS ROBES, BY HUDSON. An Equestrian portrait of LOUIS XIV. by Pârosel. The DUCHESS of MAZARINE by Sir Peter Lilly. The DUCHESS of NASSAU, painted by De Vos.

The centre of the Hall of Kings is occupied by the Magnificent Group of the Order of

BRITISH KNIGHTHOOD!

Consisting of the Order of the Garter—the Order of the Bath—the Order of the Thistle and the Order of St. Patrick, at the head of which is placed the Gorgeous Figure of GEORGE IV. in HIS CORONATION ROBES worn by himself; seen to the greatest possible advantage from the additional space, on each side, and for the First Time, the effect at one view of

MAGNIFICENT PORTRAITS IN OIL

Sculpture and Modelled Figures in Wax, in Magnificent Costumes.

In addition to the Hall of Kings are

TWO NEW NAPOLEON ROOMS!

Containing the Golden Shrine, the Camp Bed on which Napoleon Died, the full-length portrait of the Emperor by Le Fevre, the Empress Maria Louisa by Baron Gerard, and a variety of full-length Original Pictures; also the most Extraordinary

SIGHT IN THE WORLD!

The Two Carriages used by Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo, reposing vis-a-vis to one another, not having met since they were separated at the Battle which decided the fate of their Master, a period of 35 years.

This programme, cataloguing the 1850 Christmas delights at the exhibition, comes from the Tussaud Private Collection



Very much in character—Sir Anthony Eden



Mr. Harold Macmillan ponders a problem of State



Sir Winston Churchill appears in his Garter robes



Burke and Hare (above) the Edinburgh bodysnatchers of the 1820s

She was ordered to make death masks from freshly severed heads. Not only was she in prison for many months while employed on this noisome work, not only did she have her head shaved—an act preceding almost inevitable execution—but she was taken each day to the foot of the guillotine to work under its shadow.

The stark horror of it all, the regular thud of steel upon wood, would have turned the minds of many, but Marie attained a kind of peace in altering the features of many of her friends, among them Marie Antoinette and Elizabeth, from agony to serenity.

ONE July morning in 1714 Marie found the head of Robespierre awaiting her, and with his death she was released from prison—only to be confronted by another problem.

Her uncle had died mysteriously from poisoning, and her wretched mother had been quite unable to save the museum from destruction. In the next year Marie managed to conquer all the difficulties of restoration, restarting the Paris museum.

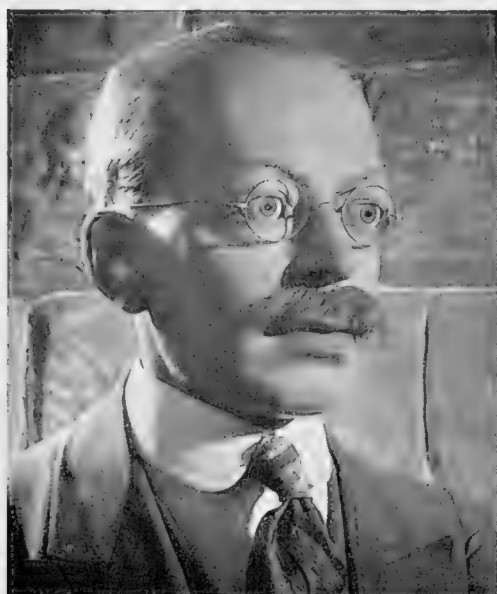
With the death or exile of most of her friends, she was even lonelier than her uncle Curtius had been. Her friendship with a childhood companion, François Tussaud, seemed to develop into a deep love. They were married, and had two sons. But neither the marriage nor the Paris museum proved a success.

FRANÇOIS was a weak character, quite overshadowed by his dynamic wife, so Marie left her husband, gathered up her collection of wax models and, with her sons, came to England.

Although her affairs were easier, troubles were constantly encountered. For the next forty years, until she retired at the age of eighty-one, Madame Tussaud, partnered now by her sons, experienced so many difficulties that it might be considered a small miracle that today Britain possessed the most famous wax collection in the world. Once her priceless moulds sank to the ocean bed on a stormy journey to Ireland. Another time they were miraculously saved from complete destruction from a drunken mob in Bristol by one giant Negro servant, who held the rioters at bay with an enormous blunderbuss.

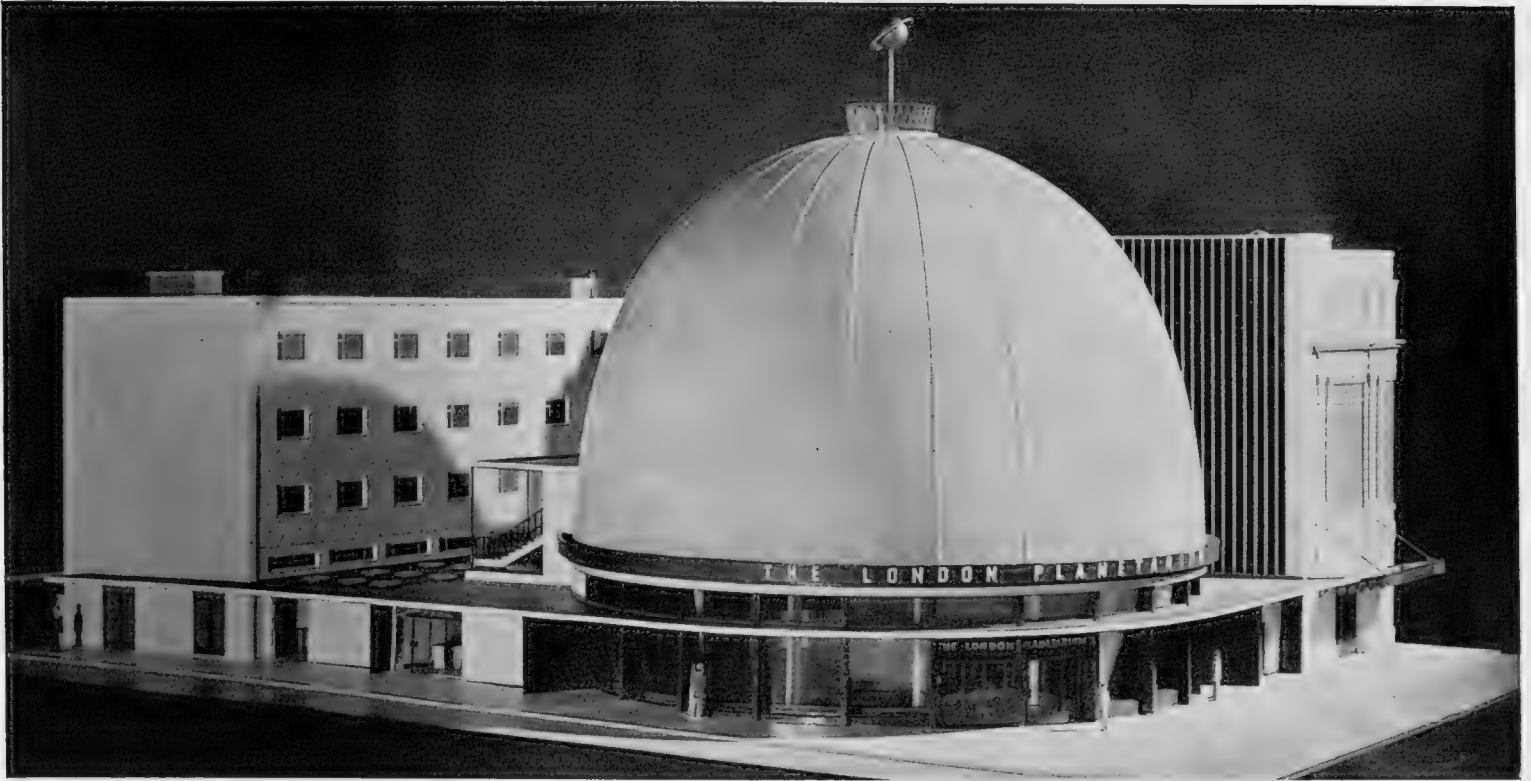
By 1842 she had had enough, and retired, but just before her death she finished a model of herself, which even now takes pride of place in the exhibition.

The waxen visage of Dr. Crippen, whose name still rings ominously on the ear



As the old lady would have wished, the museum did not become static after her death, but continued to grow in importance, stature and the public's imagination. And now, having stepped out with the times for so many years, the ultimate in scientific spectacle has been reached.

The dome that has sprouted so suddenly into mushroom brilliance beside the museum in Marylebone Road has been called a variety of things since its birth. A copper onion, an atomic secret, a circus, a house for Frankenstein's monster, a



In the Planetarium, of which this is a model, the sun, stars and planets are realistically depicted in accelerated motion by most intricate optical machinery

basin, a wall of death, a smog mass-protector, a research centre for cultivating hair on bald men and innumerable other atrocities. Strangely these pseudonyms were never attached to similar constructions in New York, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Stockholm, Tokio, and The Hague, and there was no reluctance to christen their respective domes as "Planetariums," a word as elusive in London as the Scarlet Pimpernel in France.

This, the first Planetarium in the Commonwealth, the opening of which happily coincides with the exhibition's bicentenary, is a miracle of versatility in the use of copper and reinforced concrete, for the floor is supported on massive columns eighteen feet above ground level and the eighty-foot dome is of double-skin concrete over concrete ribs, the whole weather-proofed with copper sheeting. Mr. Reginald Edds, who, I understand, has had the greater part of the planning and almost all the publicity to deal with, has watched over the years the bud of this proposed building, unfortunately pruned by the international situation in 1938, flower into magnificence this year. His aim is to give six "shows," a word hardly in keeping with a spectacle that could out-Todd Todd, upon every day of the week, each lasting about forty minutes.

One problem, perhaps "hazard" would be a better word, that I feel sure Mr. Edds will be quite unable to overcome will be courting couples; for a planetarium, the dictionary ostentatiously quotes, is a model astronomical machine which represents the motions of the planets. In other words a moonlit paradise of stars and silhouetted skyline that will facilitate romantic field-days, which will certainly be regarded as cheap at four shillings! Bottled glamour is always an attraction to moon-starved citizens.

FOR the citizens who are not courting? Well, they will be able to see the night sky projected upon the dome in various stages of seasonal development, from various positions around the world, and with various sound effects to add to the thrill. A nocturnal trip to the moon, with the sound of the rocket roaring about you as the cold lunar glow grows nearer and stronger, will be a mere excursion in the Planetarium. You may see the sky from a mountain peak or from beneath London's jagged skyline. You can see the sky in the future when Halley's Comet will be visible in 1986; the sky in the past, as it must have looked over Bethlehem at the time of Our Lord's birth, with the Guiding Star prominent. The moon will wax and wane in a few minutes for you, and an eclipse of the sun become total at your leisure.

As the complicated machine that operates these spectacles has many special lenses and was made by the famous German firm Zeiss of Oberkochen, its cost does not come as an enormous

shock—£50,000—and it can be understood why the price for one of the five hundred and forty seats will probably be four shillings.

Hidden behind the smooth façade and intricate interior of the Planetarium are years of preparation, planning and what almost amounts to dedication. Even the workmen whom I saw, like spiders on a web of scaffolding upon the inside dome, when the building was only half completed, seemed to put their whole heart into the work, and it was a rare privilege to see this, without bothering to inquire from Mr. Edds just exactly what they were building.

I was only five when World War Two started and am therefore in no position to be flippant about it, but I must confess that I am rather selfishly pleased that the grim warning of the Munich crisis in 1938 put a stop to the proposed Planetarium. For now I am old enough to appreciate the fact that what has been built upon an ugly bombed site beside Madame Tussaud's is not only a tremendous spectacle and a magnet to the city's visitors, but a credit to London, Britain, and the Commonwealth.



The Seven Dwarfs of Walt Disney as seen at Mme. Tussaud's

The strange story of the Wooden Emperor

• ALEX POTTER •

THE following advertisement, written and paid for by me, appeared a few months ago in a New York magazine:

"English student in Paris, specializing in Napoleonic history and with flair for research, would aid authors or others for moderate fee. Write: Bob Clay, Collège Franco-Britannique, Cité Universitaire, Paris, 14."

As a result, I received letters from three girls, two religious tracts, a few publicity hand-outs and a request from an historian who paid me well for a job it was a pleasure to do.

I was thinking of repeating the advertisement when a letter came from a man named Steve Drewett who was holiday-making on the Polynesian island of Tola. The magazine was being mailed to him, he chanced on my announcement, and wrote:

"I am a pretty good wood-carver, usually live in New York, and was recently shown, on this island, a life-sized wooden statue of Napoleon with a nail driven into its heart. The statue is old and obviously the work of a master, but the signature is mutilated. All I can make out is 'He-r M-una-.' The head of the nail, big and rusty, is of a type unknown in these islands."

The statue, Drewett added, had been dug up in a cave near the sea shore, and no one on the island knew how it came there. It

*Illustrations by
Henry Stringer*



may have been untouched for a century or more. Drewett was confident the statue was French, and wanted help in deciphering the creator's name, and in finding if there was any other work by him in France.

"This is an artistic rather than an historical problem," he wrote, "but perhaps you can tackle it and earn a reasonable fee."

I hadn't bargained for anything in this line, but I was hard up, and decided to have a go. The best line of inquiry, I thought, would be the editor of an art magazine, or an eminent wood-carver, or the conservator of a museum specializing in statuary in wood.

I tried all three without success. My French isn't good, I may have seemed too much interested in the picturesque side of the story, and I completed the inquiries with an impression that I hadn't been taken seriously.

Though there was little hope of finding a clue in a book, I mentioned the problem to an assistant at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and she said: "You should try Colonel Bosco. On Napoleon, he can beat all the libraries in France."

As a student of Napoleonic history I was sorry I hadn't heard of him before. Napoleon was the obsession of retired Colonel Bonaparte Bosco, a widower who lived with three servants in a rambling house in the Bois de Boulogne. This house, and a long specially designed building in the grounds, were full of Napoleonic books and documents. The colonel read, thought, talked, dreamed of little but Napoleon.

Before establishing his own collection of books he had spent most of his spare time making notes which he transferred to a card index. This index he had so patiently and cleverly enlarged that, my friend said, he could reply to any answerable question about his hero.

I went to him, he was helpful and affable, asked numerous questions, copied the mutilated signature, and said: "There's hope. I'll write you in a few days."

Awkwardly I mentioned the value of his time. "I'll be paid, and if, for my part. . . ."

He wouldn't hear of it. "If you feel you have a debt," he said, "pay it by giving a kind thought to the Emperor's memory."

It was a piquant request to make to an Englishman.

Three days later he wrote me a charming letter enclosing the following report:

THE statue of Napoleon now in the Polynesian island of Tola is the work of Colonel Henri Mounay, a talented wood-carver who was a double of the Emperor.

Mounay was born in the French West Indies and arrived in France in 1800 to join Napoleon's forces. He was met at Bordeaux by an uncle, General Antoine Lescot, a member of Napoleon's staff, who remarked on the amplitude of his young relative's beard and moustache.

Lescot took Mounay to his ancestral château at Fontelay, on the banks of the Garonne, a dozen miles from Bordeaux. There the newcomer secretly shaved. He was looking into a mirror, amused and prodigiously satisfied, when there was a knock at the door.

"Who is it?"

"Your uncle."

Mounay unlocked the door. He hadn't bargained for the

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surprise his appearance would cause. So closely did he resemble the Emperor that Lescot all but murmured "Sire!"

Lescot, a schemer, hid Mounay in the château and reported to the Emperor, into whose presence his double was smuggled. The Emperor, astonished and amused, questioned Mounay, demanded vows of secrecy, and said: "Your uncle will hide you till you are bearded and moustached. You will then work near him. You will secretly study my deportment and accustom yourself to one of my field uniforms. My voice need not worry you, nor, thank heaven, my thoughts. If you are needed, it will be merely to show yourself. Obey your uncle."

During his service as a headquarters ordnance officer under Lescot, Mounay impersonated the Emperor three times. In moments of crisis, reports of the presence of great men in this place or that can influence history. On two occasions a metamorphosed Mounay merely had to show himself to spies who thought the Emperor was elsewhere in Europe. The third time, Napoleon falling ill during a battle and rumours of his death shaking an army's morale, his impersonator mounted a steed and restored serenity by cantering along the lines.

After each impersonation Mounay changed into a trooper's uniform, his face was bandaged, and his uncle confided him to a trusted surgeon for hospital sequestration till Nature had sufficiently screened his features.

Lescot was killed at Waterloo and Mounay inherited the château, where he divided his time between wood-carving and farming. Occasionally he would look into a mirror, stroke his beard, and chuckle.

His statue of Napoleon was completed in his first year of liberty, and stood in the Emperor's Room, so called because Napoleon, during an inspection of the port of Bordeaux, had spent a night there as Lescot's guest.

Mounay, a bachelor, used the bed Napoleon had used, and never a night passed without his thoughts going to the great man in his exile. He installed the statue in a corner of the room, and occasionally gave it a friendly nod. Napoleon had never awed him.

The statue, an admirable piece of work, was carried to the Emperor's Room by Jacques Bruel, a handyman at the château who had served bravely in Napoleon's Old Guard as a corporal, but under Mounay's mild discipline at the château had pilfered and grouched. He was garrulous and superstitious, and had credited Napoleon with godlike powers.

BEFORE hoisting the statue on to his shoulders in his master's workshop, and again after grounding it in the Emperor's Room, Bruel had saluted it. His drill was so enthusiastic and efficient that Mounay, who was with him, felt bound to give a salute of his own, though a leisurely one and accompanied by a furtive smile. Bruel, Mounay guessed, had been drinking again.

Before master and servant left the Emperor's Room, Bruel cast a fascinated glance at the bed. He had tapped it, even sat on it. If he could sleep in it! Bruel had often said, and truthfully: "I have been within a few feet of the Emperor. I have heard his voice as plainly as I hear my own. I saw the colour of his eyes."

What a boast if he could say he had slept in the same bed as Napoleon! He'd do it; at the first chance, and in sight of the statue. How life-like the statue was! *Dare* he do it? That was the question. *Dare* he do it with the statue looking? Yes, he would do it, and this coming month, when, so the kitchen staff said, the master would go on a voyage to his old home.

Having made the resolve, Bruel committed the un-Napoleonic error of talking about it to comely spinster Charlotte, a long-service chambermaid at the château. Bruel had wooed her, but without success. She had found him crude, boring, boastful. Those wine-generated repetitions! Napoleon, Napoleon, Napoleon. . . . As if he'd hobnobbed with the Emperor.

"... And when the master sails," Bruel now said, opening a fresh bottle, "I'll sleep in the Emperor's bed. When I helped master to panel the room, I found a key. . . . I'll sleep in the Emperor's bed. It's a big bed, Charlotte. What a story I'll tell! Yes, Charlotte, the bed is big. A bed for two. A bed for fun. Would you, Charlotte? . . ."

"Decidedly not," said Charlotte, thrusting him off.

Next day, she told her master.

"The rascal," said Mounay. "But let him do it. Traces he's bound to leave. This fault will help me, when I return, to sack him without qualms."

Mounay had decided on a brief re-acquaintance with the West Indies. The time approached, and he arranged to ride to Bordeaux and embark the same night. On the departure day he assembled the staff and his steward, commended the house and land to their care, and received from Charlotte a whispered message: "Bruel sleeps in the Emperor's bed tonight, Monsieur."

"Occupy him till the château clock strikes one," said Mounay.

Mounay set off alone in the early evening in the direction of Bordeaux, tethered his horse in a wood after going a few miles and, at dusk, rode back. All was silent when, half an hour to midnight, he let himself into the château.

The room adjoining the Emperor's Room was his office, and the staff had been told it would be doubly locked till his return. As stealthily as a cat, he let himself into this room. He saw that no light could escape, lit a lamp, shaved off beard and moustache, donned the uniform he had kept as a souvenir, gave a Napoleonic touch to his hair, took a stance before the mirror, beheld an incarnation of the statue he had made, and chuckled.

WHEN the château clock struck one, he moved the statue from the Emperor's Room and took its place. In a few minutes Bruel reeled in, grounded the lantern he was carrying, pulled himself together, saluted the statue, cried "Long live the Emperor!" and sang a martial song. They were at a safe distance from the servants' quarters, and anyway Bruel always sang when tipsy.

He left the lantern on the floor and, after cursing France's enemies, got into bed dressed. His second breath recumbent was a prodigious snore.

Leaving his pose, Mounay picked up the lantern, advanced to the bed, held the light aloft, and with his free hand shook and slapped the roisterer to half-wakefulness. "Rapscaillon!" he cried as Bruel's bleary eyes tried to focus on to his. "Rogue! Hound! Wretch!"

Bruel's jaw dropped.

"Scoundrel! Whelp! Reptile! That Corporal Bruel, so brave at Austerlitz, should come to this!"

Bruel glanced to where the statue had stood, and groaned. Fire and blood, roaring cannon, shrieks of wounded had at times invaded his sleep. This was but another nightmare. Hadn't he woke when, in other nightmares, his soul had cried "Enough!"

"Wake!" cried Mounay.

Again Bruel glanced to where the statue had been. What was the use of looking there when Napoleon was *here*, gripping his shoulder? Mounay stepped back, Bruel rolled off the bed, then, on hands and knees, licked his boots.

"You do well," said Mounay, backing to where the statue had stood. "You do well, Corporal Bruel, so brave at Jéna and Wagram."

Bruel crawled after him, with more corner-ward glances. If only he could speak! But what do corporals say to emperors? Now Mounay put the lantern down and stood motionless where the statue had been, and Bruel groaned again.

In a pocket of the uniform Mounay wore was a stub of charcoal with which, for the impersonations, he had touched his eyebrows. Now, as though performing a rite, he made a cross on the drunkard's brow, at the same time fixing him with his fiercest stare. Bruel swooned. . . .

Two hours later a lonely horseman, in gentleman's garb, was approaching Bordeaux through the dawn. The lower part of his face was summarily bandaged, and when, first at the hostelry, then on the ship, questions were asked, he said he'd had a fall.

Shortly after his arrival in the West Indies, Mounay received a letter from his steward:

"... And I regret to inform Monsieur that early on the day following his departure, the man Bruel went out of his mind, breaking into the Emperor's Room, using the bed of Monsieur, known as the Emperor's Bed, and carrying off the statue so wonderfully executed by Monsieur. Shortly after dawn, Bruel was seen by the gamekeeper Dubois shouldering the statue towards the river.

"Stalking Bruel, Dubois saw him stop behind a bush and drive a nail into the figure's breast. The miscreant then carried the statue to the river and dropped it in. When he passed near Dubois he was seen to have a black cross on his brow.

"We can only think that these happenings are associated with Bruel's thirst, but we are unable to question him, as he has disappeared."

Bruel was never again seen at the château, or by any of its



staff. Except to Mounay and Charlotte, his treatment of the statue remained a mystery. Mounay knew Bruel had credited the statue with supernatural powers. A nail in his heart, Napoleon would not reprimand him again. . . .

When the old soldier dropped the statue into the Garonne, the river was running blithely seawards. Where the Garonne enters the Gironde estuary, boys saw the statue, and thought it was a body.

Half-way along the estuary the mate of an anchored barque made a successful pass at it with a gaff. He and the second mate were trying to sell it in a tavern that evening when the captain entered, cried: "Blackguards—you'll bring the ship bad luck!" and bore the statue to his cabin.

The barque sailed next day for Rio de Janeiro, where the captain, saying: "It will bring you luck," sold the statue to the mate of a French ship that was being fitted for trading in Polynesia.

This ship was nosing round Tola one night when a storm drove her on to a reef. She broke up. Among the flotsam was a wooden figure of a uniformed man with a nail in its heart. . . .

THAT'S what the colonel sent. I thanked him for it and mailed a copy to Drewett. I wondered where Bosco had found the story, but at this stage I couldn't very well inquire. Drewett cabled: "Excellent stop am writing stop." His letter said that on receipt of the story he had bought the statue. "I'm an artist, not a dealer," he wrote, "and though this story enhances the statue's value, I'll keep this masterpiece. I would, however, like evidence of authenticity and would pay well for originals or photostats of documents."

Said the colonel: "The American's fears are groundless. The story was written by Henri Mounay himself and the manuscript is still at the Château de Fontelay, which is now occupied by Philippe Mounay, a descendant, but with no physical or spiritual resemblance, who is an export agent at Bordeaux and does considerable business with America. Though he wouldn't sell the manuscript he might allow it to be photographed."

A photostat of the manuscript was sent to Drewett who, though

an artist, had the average American's ideas about publicity, and called a press conference, with the statue among those present, while hand-outs of photos and Mounay's story were liberally distributed.

Next morning, Napoleon, Mounay, Bruel, Drewett—and in a lesser degree Colonel Bonaparte Bosco and I—hit the headlines. Write-up men had a fine game with the story, and from the publicity came a museum's offer of 50,000 dollars for the statue.

French newspapers of course reported developments, but when I told the colonel that, in view of our rôles, we might be substantially rewarded, he wasn't interested. "If there's anything for me, take it yourself," he said, adding, as he had done before, "and think kindly of Napoleon."

Next day it was reported that a rival museum had offered 75,000 dollars, and I cabled Drewett: "Congratulations on developments."

He replied: "Thanks stop despite art am now interested in dollars stop you not forgotten stop."

ON the following day a collector in Boston offered 100,000 dollars, and it was at this point that Philippe Mounay took the stage. "The statue," he proclaimed, "belongs to the Mounay family.

"In other words, it's mine."

Meanwhile, the 100,000-dollar offer had been accepted, though Drewett soon cabled me: "Not yet paid stop appears to be a hitch stop."

On the day I received this message Philippe Mounay began an action for recovery of the statue. Then impatient creditors of his in America stated that, if the statue was declared to be his, they would oppose its departure from America. Next day, the Polynesian ex-owner of the statue swore he had only lent it to Drewett, and the museum that had bid 75,000 dollars affirmed that Drewett had accepted the offer.

Other claims are expected, but they will be dealt with as speedily as possible, and there are prospects of everything being settled, and my part in the affair being completely forgotten, by the year 2000.

All these pieces were formerly in the collection belonging to King Farouk. They range from a jade and ivory crochet hook to a miniature roulette wheel constructed of gold and semi-precious stones



GIFT-MAKER TO FAIRYLAND

ERNLE BRADFORD describes the fabulous life and work of the greatest of all jewellers. The colour photographs are from H. C. Bainbridge's "Peter Carl Fabergé" (Batsford); black and white from Wartski's, Regent Street, W.1

ON May 30, 1846, the wife of a jeweller in St. Petersburg gave birth to a son, Peter Carl Fabergé, whose name is as sure of a place in the hierarchy of the great craftsmen as that of Benvenuto Cellini. Seventy-four years later, a tired old man died in exile in Lausanne. The Tsar and Tsarina for whom so many of his works of art had been conceived, were dead—brutally murdered. The great house of Romanoff was scattered throughout the world. Imperial Holy Russia had ceased to exist. "This is life no more" were Fabergé's last recorded words.

In the long span of that life Carl Fabergé had seen the final flowering of the Age of Luxury. In the amazing Russia of the last two Tsars he had witnessed the climax to a way of life that was to disappear from Europe for ever in 1914. He had been the strange secret knowledge of a jeweller—as intimate almost as the confessional. He had known for which ballet dancer Prince G— had just commanded a new diamond necklace, and why it was that X—, the great merchant banker, always bought pieces of jewellery in pairs: the least expensive being for his wife. He had made jewelled Easter Eggs for the Tsars—over fifty of them in the course of thirty-five years; jade Buddhas for the King of Siam; gold cigarette cases for King Edward VII, and models in semi-precious stone of the Sandringham animals for Queen Alexandra.

NO craftsman was ever luckier in his patronage. Even Cellini, at the height of Italian Renaissance, had to search for clients. But Fabergé, living in the great days of Victorian and Edwardian prosperity, was courted and sought after as no jeweller ever was before, and most probably never will be again. To the end of his life he remained quiet, courteous, without conceit. He was a man of whom his biographer—who had known him for many years—could say, "I never heard him speak ill of anyone."

Although the Fabergé family had been in Russia for nearly two hundred years they were of Huguenot stock, and Carl Fabergé himself was sent to Paris for his education. It was there, too, that before returning to his father's shop he was most probably apprenticed to a Parisian goldsmith. It is a curious fact that the rise of the House of Fabergé was largely due to the patronage of the Tsar Alexander III. This ruthless and autocratic Emperor, of whom Queen Victoria said he was "a sovereign whom she does not look upon as a gentleman," possessed an instinct, which fortunately many despots have shared, of being a great



Miniature frames. Rhodonite frame with gold and gem ornament (left), enamelled gold frame (above) apricot coloured; and enamelled gold cinnamon coloured with rose-diamonds (upper left)



Translucent lime-green enamel, trellised in gold. The working model of the Coronation coach in yellow gold, red enamel and rose-diamonds with red translucent upholstery fits in the egg. Height, 5 in.; coach length, 3¼ in.

patron of the arts. It was this giant of a man—on one occasion when the Imperial train was derailed by Nihilists he held up the roof of the dining-car on his shoulders while his children and relatives escaped—who appointed the House of Fabergé as Court jewellers and goldsmiths. From this moment the fortunes of the house were made. Aided by the talent as well as the business acumen of Carl Fabergé, its products soon became a byword for taste and excellence throughout Europe.

"ARTISTS who aspire to immortality," wrote J. Addington Symonds, "must shun the precious metals." He was speaking of Cellini, but his words remain true for all who practise the craft of goldsmith or jeweller. Inevitably, a great deal of Fabergé's jewellery has been broken up, or the stones reset, in the course of the last forty years. But we are fortunate in that a great deal of Fabergé's work was bought by patrons in England and France during his lifetime. Also, the fact that jewellery is easily portable meant that many of his pieces were taken into exile with them by the Russian emigrés in their flight after the Revolution. Apart from numerous pieces in private, as well as the Royal collections

[Continued overleaf

The cock is made of nephrite with cabochon ruby eyes and feet in yellow gold. It is just over two inches long



This working model of a sedan chair is in pink translucent enamel on gold, mountings in red and green gold. The windows are of rock crystal, while the inside furnishings are made of mother-of-pearl



The bear (above) is constructed of obsidian, and its eyes are made from two rose-diamonds





Obsidian frog, which is almost three inches in length, with eyes made of rose-diamond

The Imperial Russian Easter Egg is in pink enamel quartered by rose-diamonds decorated with lilies of the valley in pearls and rose-diamonds, with green gold and enamel leaves. The "surprise" is of miniatures of Tsar Nicholas II and two of his children, raised and lowered by means of the pearl buttons on each side

in England, there is still a fair amount of Fabergé's work on the open market. It ranges from small objects of *minuterie* like pencil cases and parasol handles to the large objects of fantasy such as the Imperial Easter Eggs.

These Easter Eggs, miracles of craftsmanship, were originally commissioned by Alexander III as an annual present for his Danish-born Empress. All of them, even those in which a somewhat Edwardian vulgarity is evident, are perfections of technique, whether in gem-setting, enamelling or gold work. Each egg contained a "surprise"; sometimes miniatures of the Tsarina's children; sometimes working models of the Coronation coach; or on one occasion an automatic gold swan, which, when lifted from its nest on a lake of aquamarine, walks, stretches its neck and flaps its wings. (This last was until quite recently in the collection of King Farouk. The mechanical swan may seem a trifle absurd, but it is contained in one of the most beautiful of all the eggs, made of opaque mauve enamel latticed with diamond ribbons.)

AFTER the death of Alexander III, Nicholas II continued his father's practice and, as well as giving an egg each year to his wife, gave one also to the Dowager Empress, his mother. Perhaps the finest of these eggs now in existence is that in the Royal Collections, which previously belonged to Queen Mary. The egg, made in 1914, is a platinum network in which are set thousands of square-cut precious stones. It is a miracle of colour and design.

The "surprise," which consists of a cameo representing the five Imperial children, is set in an enamelled frame with diamonds and pearls. It is an ironical reflection that the art of the jeweller, which is intended to record the highlights and gaieties of life, should so often become involved in its tragedies. No one today can look at this small cameo of five children without feeling an acute sense of tragedy; and without thinking of that night at

Ekaterinburg four years later when the world of Fabergé and fantasy was shattered for ever by a fusillade of shots.

If the Imperial Easter Eggs represent the highest flights of the House of Fabergé, many of its finest productions are to be found in smaller articles. Here, the Russian tendency towards extravagance is counteracted by the limitations of the medium. Fabergé's cigarette cases, powder boxes, fan holders and other kinds of small work reveal a grace and elegance which can almost equal the snuff-boxes and small work of the Louis XIV and Louis XV periods. If it is not too much to trace a personal ancestry through the Fabergé workshops (which employed over seven hundred craftsmen) it would seem that in these articles there runs a streak of that Gallic taste and discretion which was Fabergé's inheritance from his Huguenot forefathers.

COMPARISONS between Fabergé and Cellini have often been made, but too often on the wrong grounds. All one can say is that both were the master-craftsmen of their day. Further one cannot go, for the conditions which brought Fabergé to fame were such that they enabled him to maintain workshops in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Odessa and Kiev, as well as a branch in London.

Cellini, at the height of his fame, probably never employed more than a dozen craftsmen, all of whom were working under his direct personal supervision, Carl Fabergé, on the other hand, although himself an outstanding designer, was inevitably—as the head of a large and prosperous firm—more and more divorced from the work bench, and employed several other designers to work for him.

It is interesting to record that Alfred Pocock, the only English craftsman who was ever employed by Fabergé, is still alive in this country and still at work. As a young student Pocock was first engaged to model some of the animals at Sandringham for

Queen Alexandra's collection. The models were then taken to St. Petersburg to be cut in precious stones by Fabergé's workmen.

Apart from the Easter eggs, the jewellery and the small work in general, one of the most popular and unusual products of Fabergé were the artificial flowers, carved in precious and semi-precious stones. There is something incredibly fascinating about this perfect copying of nature, although the impulses which prompted it cannot be termed truly creative. What one can always admire about these pieces, however, is their exquisite craftsmanship.

One spray of flowers rests in a rock crystal vase, the flowers themselves being made in rhodonite and white chalcedony, the leaves in nephrite, and the stalk in gold. A basket of lilies of the valley has the leaves in nephrite, the flowers in pearls and rose-diamonds and the stalks, moss and basket in different coloured golds.

Fabergé's craftsmen were expert in the use of coloured golds, and some of their best effects are achieved in this medium.

TECHNICALLY, the products of Fabergé are always superb. He benefited by the scientific advances of the nineteenth century, and matched them with a precision of hand-work that can rival the great French masters of the eighteenth century.

In terms of taste they cannot always be said to equal the French masters, for they sometimes suffer from an almost Oriental extravagance. A salutary reminder that Fabergé did not produce all the finest boxes and small-work in the world is provided by a visit to the Wallace Collection at Hertford House, where the goldsmiths' work of the great age of France shows us where Fabergé's ancestry lay. It is the marriage of Gallic taste and Russian fantasy that produces the best of Fabergé.

It is doubtful whether the world will ever know another jeweller of this stature. Like the last Tsar of all the Russias, he belongs to history. In these days when "everyone has a social conscience," it is easy to see the injustice behind the world which gave birth to Fabergé. His art, however, is like the pyramids in miniature. One may condemn the society which gave rise to it, but one can only marvel and regret that nothing like it will ever be seen again. During the 1914-1918 war the Fabergé workshops were taken over for the manufacture of shells and small-arms. The Age of Precious Metals was over. The Age of Steel was ushered in.



Gold cigarette case (above) with cabochon gem stud and (below) plain gold case with tinder attachment and a compartment for matches



The gold enamelled mechanical swan from an Imperial Easter Egg. The bird can walk, stretch its neck and flap its wings

In pearls and rose-diamonds is this basket of lilies of the valley. The leaves are nephrite; the stalks, with basket and moss, gold

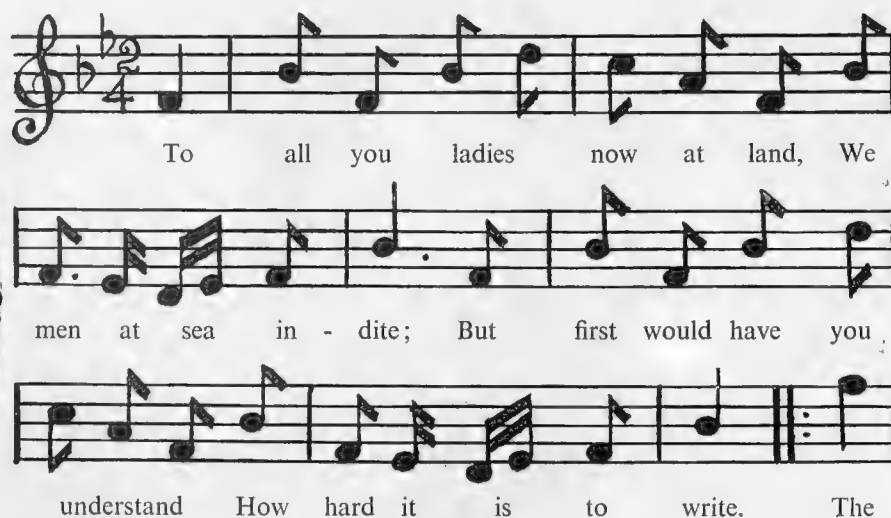


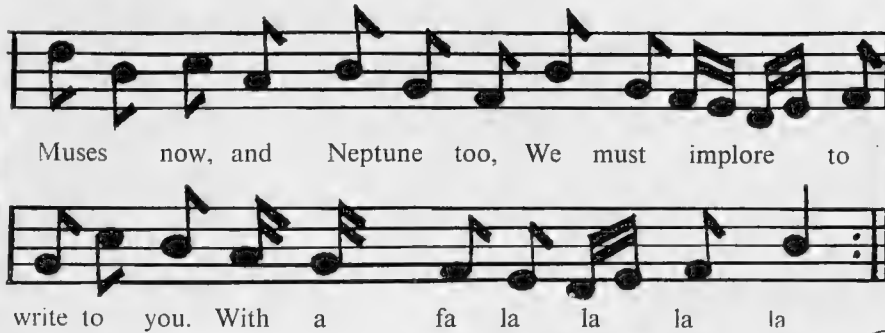


Charles Sackville (1638-1706), who wrote the verses on these pages, was the sixth Earl of Dorset and the first of Middlesex. He was also well known for his riotous life. To dissipation he brought high standards; and his roistering, in which he was accompanied, excess for excess, by that equally long-stayer, Sir Charles Sedley, he brought to a fine, if not noble, art. That he had time in his life for other than vice can be gauged by his serving as a volunteer in the fleet in 1665 against the Dutch. By then he had already been elected to Parliament at the tender but, for Sackville, ripe age of twenty-two. Yet his principal occupations were those of courtier and poet. He retired from court life during James II's reign, but was made privy councillor and Lord Chamberlain by William. And, generous to himself, he was alike open-handed to men of letters, Prior, Wycherley and Dryden benefiting among many others.



Go all you ladies





For though the Muses should prove kind,
And fill our empty brain,
Yet, if rough Neptune rouse the wind
To waze the azure main,
Our paper, pen, and ink, and we
Roll up and down our ships at sea. With a fa etc.

Then if we write not by each post,
Think not we are unkind,
Nor yet conclude your ships are lost,
By Dutchmen or by wind;
Our tears we'll send a speedier way,
The tide shall bring them twice a day. With a fa etc.

The king, with wonder and surprise,
Will swear the seas grow bold,
Because the tides will higher rise,
Than e'er they us'd of old;
But let him know it is our tears
Bring floods of grief to Whitehall stairs. With a fa etc.

Could foggy Opdam chance to know
Our sad and dismal story,
The Dutch would scorn so weak a foe,
And put their fort at Goree;
For what resistance can they find
From men who've left their hearts behind! With a fa etc.

Let wind and weather do its worst,
Be you to us but kind;
Let Dutchmen vapour, Spaniards curse,
No sorrow we shall find.
'Tis then no matter how things go,
Or who's our friend, or who's our foe. With a fa etc.

To pass our tedious hours away,
We throw a merry main;
Or else at serious ombre play;
But why should we in vain
Each other's ruin thus pursue?
We were undone when we left you. With a fa etc.

But now our fears tempestuous grow,
And cast our hopes away;
Whilst you, regardless of our woe,
Sit careless at a play;
Perhaps permit some happier man
To kiss your hand or flirt your fan. With a fa etc.

When any mournful tune you hear,
That dies in every note;
As if it sigh'd with each man's care,
For being so remote;
Think then how often love we've made
To you, when all those tunes were play'd. With a fa etc.

In justice you cannot refuse
To think of our distress,
When we for hopes of honour lose
Our certain happiness;
All those designs are but to prove
Ourselves more worthy of your love. With a fa etc.

And now we've told you all your loves,
And likewise all our fears;
In hopes this declaration moves
Some pity from your tears;
Let's hear of no inconstancy,
We have too much of that at sea. With a fa etc.



THE SOLE OUTCOME OF A NARROW SHAVE

My dear Uncle Charles,
You know me well. Was I ever a vindictive child or capable of slipping arsenic into my parents' gin in order to go to the Orphans' Tea Party? Did I ever bowl underarm in the Eton wall game? Of course not. But just now, Uncle, I really do feel fiendishly minded toward you.

Why did you do it? Of all the things you could have given me for Christmas, a comb, a box of handkerchiefs, or even what I wanted most—that literary masterpiece of comedy *War And Peace* (in seven volumes)—you had to choose an electric razor.

My intended—and we were more than just good friends—Mabel Parking-Smythe (the one who threw the champagne-soaked bun at You Know Who in Ireland), a spirited girl and gifted with a fine seat (the Parking-Smythe country manor), has left me for another, because of that razor.

But I will tell you all and if it does not bring a lump of pity to your eyes, then you are a harsher man than I thought, Uncle.

Locked in my lodgings, Mabel standing by with Dettol and swabs in case of accidents, I plugged in the razor as the instructions instructed, and switched it on. How smooth, how delicately light and tender it was upon the skin. Ecstatically I voiced my utter joy and relief to Mabel who, to my astonishment, switched it off and told me somewhat acidly to remove the plastic shield from the cutters and to start again, and not to play the fool, because she wasn't amused.

SHEEPISHLY I tried again. This time the noise was quite indescribable, and Mabel was obliged to sacrifice the swabs in favour of ear plugs. The pain, too, was the worst I have ever experienced, but muttering Floreat Etona, or something like, and stiffening my upper lip I pressed on. Needless to say, being a true-blooded



Englishman, I conquered the horrible thing in a few days, but it left me scarred for life and in need of expert plastic surgery.

It was just about that time when Mabel, whose passion was fast cooling, rather tersely invited me down for a weekend party at Parking-Smythe Manor. It was not a success.

On Friday evening I plugged the horror into a chandelier, turned the switch, and plunged the Manor, the estate, and half the local village into complete darkness. On Saturday evening, only a few hours after the incident had been smoothed over, I did the same thing again. The first nervous signs of a mental breakdown made themselves evident on Sunday morning, and with a three days' growth of beard, I decided it would be best for me to leave immediately. Mabel agreed, and made it quite clear that next Season's List was now quite out of the question for me.

I returned to my miserable lodgings and on the way bought a bottle of gin with my last pocketful of money. Now whenever I wish to get drunk quietly I take the precaution of preparing myself as for bed and laying everything in order for the next morning so as to get to the office with the minimum of effort. So, in my pyjamas, the razor plugged in for instant use, I opened the bottle. And then it happened.

In reaching out for a glass my arm caught in the razor's flex, which looped itself with perfect grace about the neck of the open bottle, tightened, and turned the whole thing upside down, emptying the entire contents into my new suede boots.

That was the last straw and with demoniac howls of wrath I fell upon the boots to rescue the last drops of nectar. Then I lay upon the bed muttering foul oaths and thinking wild thoughts. I must have dropped off because it was dark when I awoke. And I suddenly knew exactly what I had to do.

Slipping off the bed I fumbled for the plastic case and then, holding it well away from the body, tiptoed downstairs, through the kitchen, and into the little yard at the back. Taking the cord from my pyjama trousers I tied one end to the case and the other to a slab of concrete and then plopped the whole lot into an enormous oozing water butt, muttering heathen burial rites that I learned at prep. school. Then I scurried back to bed clutching my pyjamas about me.

In the morning when I awoke the first thing my eyes settled on was the razor. I had buried an empty case, Uncle. I really broke down then, and the end came when the landlady found me trying to strangle myself with the flex.

There you have it all, Uncle George. And on you I pin my last shred of hope. Won't you please, help me?

I remain your loving nephew,
ANDREW.

PS. I had to bribe the gardener to post this. They don't let us out of the asylum grounds.





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Do you like the tangy flavour of Continental "high roast" coffee? Then here is the special Nescafé for you. Allow a teaspoonful for each cup, and simply add piping hot water. Nescafé Blend 37 dissolves instantly, giving you the *perfect black coffee*. Price 4/6d. a tin.

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CONTINENTAL ROAST

Theatre Royal

[Continued from page 12]

of these productions which they received from the late Hubert Tannar, the producer who guided the royal Thespians. These productions included *Cinderella*, *Aladdin* and *Old Mother Red Riding Boots*. Each production included, besides its leading ladies, children from the Royal Estate. There were two or three performances of each production which were given in aid of the Royal Wool Fund.

Mr. Tannar agrees to being well served by his ancillary staffs. Castle craftsmen provided the carpentry and properties—led by a castle superintendent whose patience was infinite and whose resource boundless. But help was received from all quarters, even, as the Victorians might have said, “the highest in the land.” For the late King George VI and the Queen Mother (Queen Elizabeth as she then was) encouraged, appreciated and helped. This assistance was moreover of the material kind and not confined to encouraging remarks from the darkened auditorium, the usual part played by the actor’s friend. They helped, directly, in production and suggestion, as well as giving that concrete help in the finding of “the right piece of stuff to make a perfect drape” and article of jewellery to adorn the head of the Fairy Queen or spangles for the last act of the reformed Wicked Uncle.

Their Majesties, the late King, and Queen, were the encouraging, practical leaders. We have it on the authority of Mr. Tannar that from the script to final performance both the King and Queen spared whatever time there was after their day’s work for examining and polishing, cheering on and criticizing the pantomime’s progress to date. This was besides, Mr. Tannar adds, “inserting those multitudinous touches which make for finished production.”

DURING the war the King’s day was arduous, climbing bomb damage, visiting bomb victims, walking endlessly through factories, inspecting soldiers, trudging across acres of training grounds and travelling miles by railway (and we all know the pleasures of rail travel during the war). No doubt these pantomime activities came as a relaxation, especially as the pantomimes owed their origin to Their Majesties’ desire to see their own children in happy circumstances, surrounded by other children of their own age and appreciating the pleasures that those other young people would similarly enjoy.

The cast was drawn from all the children at Windsor Castle; the rehearsals were held in the warm Waterloo Chamber. When the King was present there were few nervous signs among either players or workers. His Majesty, continued Mr. Tannar, was a keen audience, and though he (Mr. Tannar), as producer, endeavoured to iron out any errors, some slipped by him. The King often spotted a piece of business which was out of view of the end seats of the front stalls, perhaps an improvement in an entrance, possibly a piece of furniture which slightly clashed with the lighting. Above all, though, a detail of lack of chorus precision. The King was precise, neat, liked things ended neatly and did not hesitate to voice his opinions. Mr. Tannar recalls the time when a famous slogan was very popular and how His Majesty had used it to good effect. One girl, in a finale, had a long distance to cross before freezing into the tableau. Yet time and again she would instinctively take an extra step after the last note of the music had died away. Repetition and different poses were tried unavailingly. She continued to arrive late until the King’s deep voice was heard to boom down the darkened auditorium in desperation—“Is her journey really necessary?”

The Queen, naturally enough, was more often present. So Her Majesty’s practical experience was more easily available. The Queen Mother, it will be recalled, was brought up in a home where the family provided its own amusements. She has a penchant for dramatic performances arranged sometimes on the spur of the moment after the manner of charades. Sometimes the affair was more elaborate with full rehearsal, costume and scenery. What child, in any case, can resist “dressing up”?

THESE would be interspersed with song, dance and poetry. Thus the Princesses were fortunate in that their mother not only enjoyed the same tastes but could contribute practically to the mounting fun, who was aware of the difficulties of devising scenery capable of being constructed and painted by what talent was available, who could invent costumes which could be made from odds and ends of material. There were always remnants to be acquired from upholstering and curtaining jobs that had been carried out at Windsor Castle before the war. These were most skilfully adapted

The Royal pantomime—that of 1942 was the first—was naturally no spur-of-the-moment production. During the year Mr. Tannar, producer, director, writer of the production, would receive from Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret odd little pieces of paper from time to time. These were suggested jokes that they had read in the papers, heard on the radio, or more often than not, that had been tried in their own circle. Sometimes the handwriting would be their mother’s.

This authority, and he should know since he worked in such close collaboration with them, believed that both Princesses possessed, theatrically, an indefinable “something.” In adults, no doubt, this would be called “stage presence.” Each had it after her particular fashion and each showed it in an entirely different way. This was instanced by the excited expression of nervousness from Princess Margaret before the curtain went up, and the cold silence of real nervousness evinced by Princess Elizabeth; the confidence of Princess Margaret when she felt success, even to

the extent of adding to the rehearsed business; the solid and certain reproduction of business given by Princess Elizabeth with brightness and confidence; Princess Margaret’s sensing of the audience’s admiration compared with Princess Elizabeth’s sinking all thought for herself in the part she was playing.

At last production reaches stage rehearsals; the principals, minor characters, and chorus come together, the initial tangles are sorted out, the exciting fructification of an idea, that until then had been seen at best embryonically, begins. The chorus seem to wait in awed silence as the principals speak, the dances are joined up, the production is now firmly under way, being shaped now rather than constructed.

THEN through the final rehearsal—band, lights, scenery, props costumes to the performances. Her Majesty often stood at the rear of the darkened hall when rehearsals were on, observing the colour, light, clarity of diction and precision. Later, in the dressing-room, she would praise and criticize, suggesting improvements if necessary. Then, at the last two performances Their Majesties would be in official attendance. At these performances the King and the Queen were on cue for applause and chorus singing, a “claque” in short, cheer-leaders like any parents at a school play in which their offspring were appearing. From these royal pantomimes, it should not be forgotten, charity benefited to the extent of some hundreds of pounds.



“Try ‘Peace on Earth’ just once more—then we go back and fetch the battering-ram”



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Looking back, it seems that the English have always enjoyed —



wearing the same sort of clothes as one another —



until today

Drawings by Michael Jfolkes



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*The Standard Motor Company wish all owners and prospective owners
of their products a very happy Christmas
and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.*



The Standard Motor Company Limited, Coventry, England.

"Fleeced with December snow . . ." [Continued from page 19]

whether a parcel had arrived for him from Czechoslovakia. I pointed to the amount of trousers and jackets, whereupon the story was unfolded. Apparently he had a brother, a dentist, in Slovakia who had all his earthly fortune in gold. This brother, wanting to get out of Slovakia because of the Nazi menace, and determined to save his fortune, had this case manufactured: all its hinges were made of gold—hence its excessive weight. We pulled the case to bits and found indeed all the hinges were of solid gold. The case, I was told, was worth over £10,000. Now, while I was delighted to help anyone to escape from the Nazi menace, I could not understand why the gold had been sent to me and why I had not at least been informed of its pending arrival. The brother murmured something about living in digs and not having a permanent address. I pondered over the situation for a moment: it was not a crime, then, under English law and I did not care much whether the laws of Slovakia had been infringed or not. So my visitor went off with his gold. I passed the old clothing and the remnants of the packing case to the housekeeper and dismissed the whole episode from my mind.

I was expecting a few friends in for the evening—in Continental fashion we were going to celebrate Christmas Eve. About seven o'clock—too early for my guests—the bell rang. Two strangers were at the door. They introduced themselves as police officers. I asked them to come in and sit down.

"We have a question to ask you," said the younger one, who had a large, red moustache and looked for all the world

like a detective in a funny film. "Are you an enemy agent?"

I was more amused than taken aback.

"Well," I replied, "as a matter of fact I am not. On the other hand I rather think I should say the same if I were. So there we are."

The young man was not amused.

"And your friend with whom you are sharing the flat? Are you sure he is not an enemy agent?"

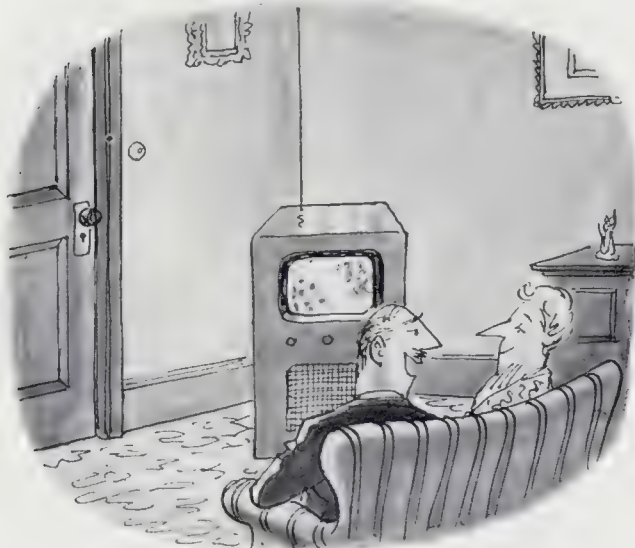
"I don't think so," I said. "But I must tell you in all fairness that he is rather an absent-minded chap and he may have forgotten to tell me."

"We must see him personally."

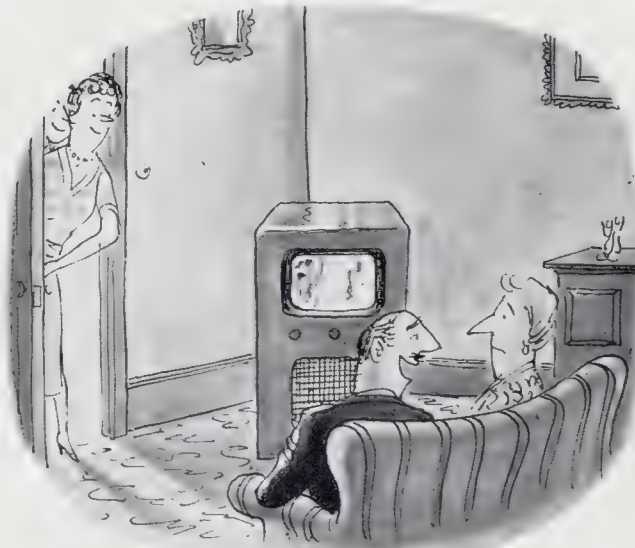
I called my friend. He declared that he was no enemy agent either.

I invited the policemen to search the flat if they thought it contained concealed radio transmitters or foreign spies. They replied that they had no warrant to do that. Then they broke out in smiles and explained that the reason for their visit was an urgent but anonymous letter and, while in peacetime it was customary to disregard any obviously nonsensical information, now, in wartime, one had to check up on everything. So I, in turn, told them the story of the packing case which had clearly given rise to rumours and suspicion. The policemen were satisfied and accepted a gin and tonic. Indeed, they accepted about four or five gin and tonics.

The police officers were still in my flat when two of my guests arrived. As one of these was the younger son of an earl, the last vestige of suspicion was wiped from our names.



"What a difference—"



"From the awful crush—"



"When we watched the TV party:—"



"Last Christmas"

Christmas fare over eighty years [Continued from page 20]

RECIPES

Le Pâté de la Comtesse de Preux

This delicious dish dates from the days when game was cheap and plentiful, and I used always to make it before Christmas. Nowadays it is an extravagance, but I still make it sometimes because everyone likes it, and it is a wonderful stand-by for Christmas-time entertaining. It is made of one hare, two old partridges, and four pigeons; and half a pound of fat pork with no lean at all. I get the poulterer to joint the hare.

First I cut off every bit of meat from the hare. Then I cut up the partridges, carving the breasts whole and then divide each breast into two, and then cut off all the rest of the flesh from the birds, finally turning them upside down to get at further morsels underneath. Then I deal with the pigeons in exactly the same way. (This cutting-up of raw game is a troublesome business, and I find that the best way is to do it with a small sharp knife and one's fingers. A carving-knife and fork are not the right tools.) I put aside the pieces of the birds' breasts; and all the rest of the meat from the birds, and the hare, and also the fat pork, I put through the mincer twice. I then mix all this minced material in a large bowl with plenty of seasoning—a teaspoonful of salt and one of black pepper, a good pinch of grated nutmeg and the juice of half a lemon—scattered over it gradually as it is stirred. I have ready a large, shallow fireproof dish (with a very well-fitting lid) and butter the dish carefully. When the minced meat is thoroughly well mixed with its seasoning, a layer of it is put into the dish, and then the pieces of the birds' breasts are arranged on it—half the total number of pieces—then more mince, then the rest of the pieces, and then a final layer of mince. All this material must be pressed down very firmly indeed until it is a firm solid mass. The incorporated pieces must not show on the surface, which should be perfectly flat and firm and smooth, and at least half an inch lower than the rim of the dish. Four thick slices are cut from a very large onion, each slice is stuck with four cloves, and the slices put on the surface of the *pâté*. I then pour in four spoonfuls of brandy, and put on the lid. This is sealed with a

little wettish flour-and-water dough, pressed all along the rim of the dish, where the lid joins it. The dish is put into a low oven (320 deg., Gas No. 2) for four hours. The lid is left sealed for twenty-four hours, then the paste is scraped off, the lid removed, and the slices of onion taken out.

This *pâté* ought not to be put into the refrigerator. It will keep perfectly for a fortnight in a cool place. It is not meant to be turned out, but should be left in its *terrine* and carved in thin slices with a sharp knife, and eaten with fresh toast and butter, as it is a *pâté terrine*.

Excellent soup can be made with the carcasses of the birds, and of the hare, in considerable quantities—so it is not such a very extravagant dish after all.

(*Cooking Ahead*, by Barbara Worsley-Gough. Published by Faber and Faber. London.)

Soupe à l'Oignon Savoyarde

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(*What Shall We Have Today?* 365 Recipes for all the Days of the Year, by X. Marcel Boulestin. London. Heinemann. 1931.)



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Beef for Christmas

[Continued from page 27]

servants are able to do their work. Or perhaps they have a more sensible diet?" she added hopefully.

"No, I like them to have the same as I do. Now, shall we meet in the drawing-room in a few minutes' time? I have a little surprise for you."

THE drawing-room at Natchett Grange was sixty feet long and down one side of it ran a row of great Georgian windows with magnificent old damask curtains. Tonight we saw that from the farthest window to the wall opposite to it had been hung a curtain like that of a stage. Before this our chairs had been arranged so that we should sit as it were in a theatre waiting for the curtain to rise.

It took some time for us to gather, and in view of the events that followed it was a good thing that I noted with scrupulous care in what order the guests arrived. Beef and I were the first with Mrs. Watlow, while Mrs. Siddley followed shortly. Then Mollie clumped in speaking loudly across the room to her mother—something about a breath of fresh air. There was a long wait after that before Egbert came to the door and looked round as though in bewilderment. The Major came in alone and then the doctor.

Suddenly a loudspeaker near the curtain began to play popular music—much too loudly I thought. This was surprising to me for among other things which Mrs. Siddley had told me about her uncle was the fact that he detested music and that one of the few ways of spending he did not indulge was the collection of gramophone records. Still, I thought, it might be necessary to introduce the entertainment, whatever it was, which was about to follow.

Merton Watlow himself had not appeared and when I saw Beef looking anxiously towards the door I thought this was at least ominous. I made a sign of inquiry to Beef but he ignored this. He looked rather flushed from the food and drink he had consumed.

We must have sat waiting for at least ten minutes before anything was done to relieve the tension. Then Beef spoke.

"I think I'd better go and have a look."

A VOICE replied from the doorway, the strong harsh voice of Merton Watlow himself.

"That won't be necessary," he said. "I'm sorry to have kept you waiting. As you know the staff have their Christmas dinner this evening and I have just been to drink a health with them."

I had noticed that since we left the dining-room none of the servants had been in evidence.

"Now, if you'll all take your places I have, as I say, a little surprise for you."

The suspense was not the pleasurable one felt by the audience in a theatre before the curtain rises, indeed I should describe it as apprehension rather than suspense. I myself felt like that for I was certain that whatever we should see would not be designed genuinely for our pleasure.

We watched as Merton Watlow crossed to the corner in front of us where the stage curtain reached the window. He began very slowly to draw down a cord and as he did so the lights in the drawing-room auditorium were lowered and the curtains began slowly to part. Only when they were several feet apart did the music cease.

Behind the curtains the end of the room had been turned into a miniature stage, with illumination sufficient but not too much for whatever person was to occupy it. Then we saw enter with his accustomed smile and friendly manner the ineffable Mr. Raymond Gidley.

I NEED not describe his entertainment—there can be few who are unfamiliar with his famous charm and air of sincerity. It lasted half an hour at least and the curious little audience applauded it fitfully.

While we were recovering from it, Merton Watlow approached Dr. Siddley.

"I think now if you'd care to take a look at Philip," he suggested. "I'm sure it's nothing much but since you've been so good as to suggest it we may as well take advantage of your offer."

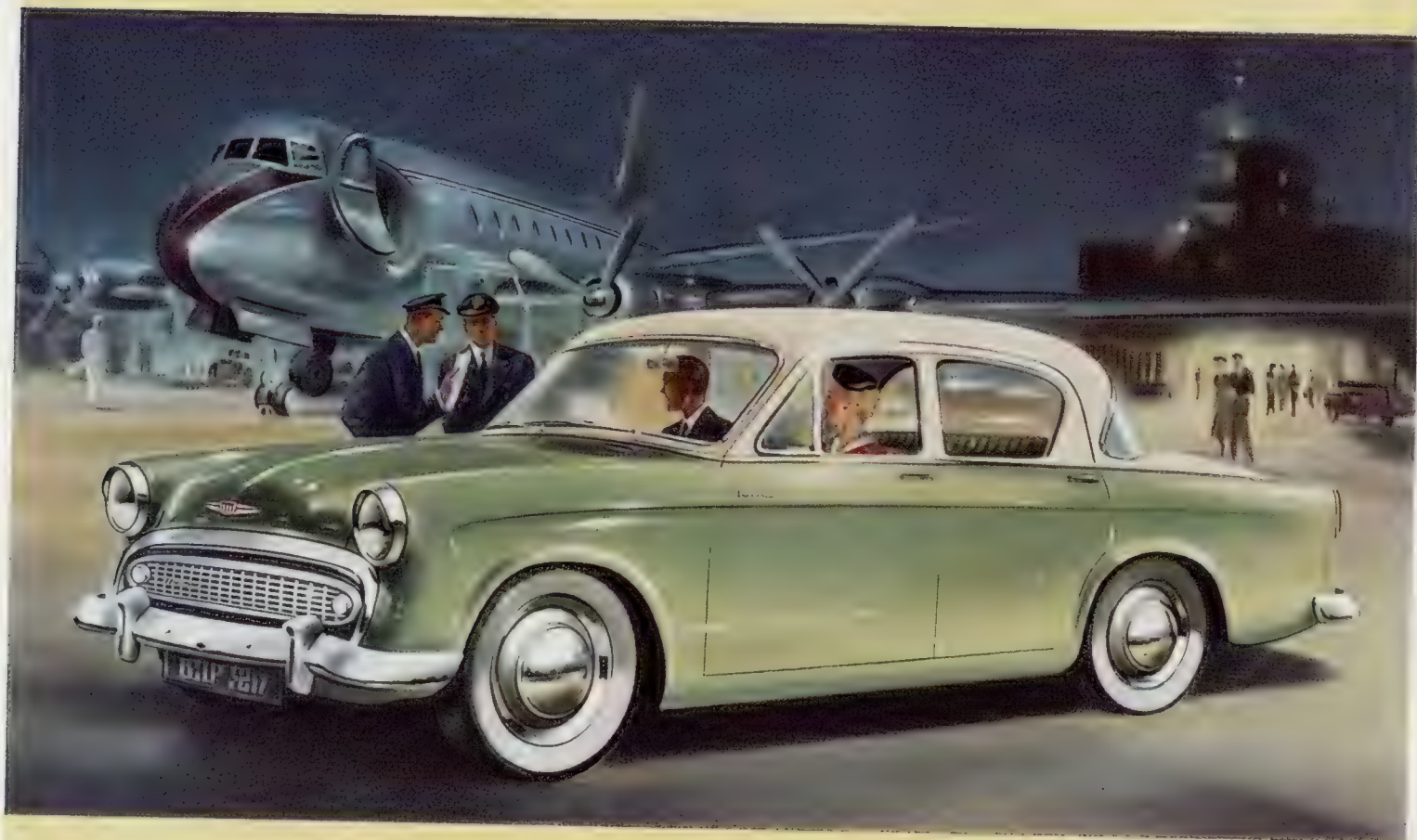
"Certainly," said Siddley and left the room.

[Continued on page 65]



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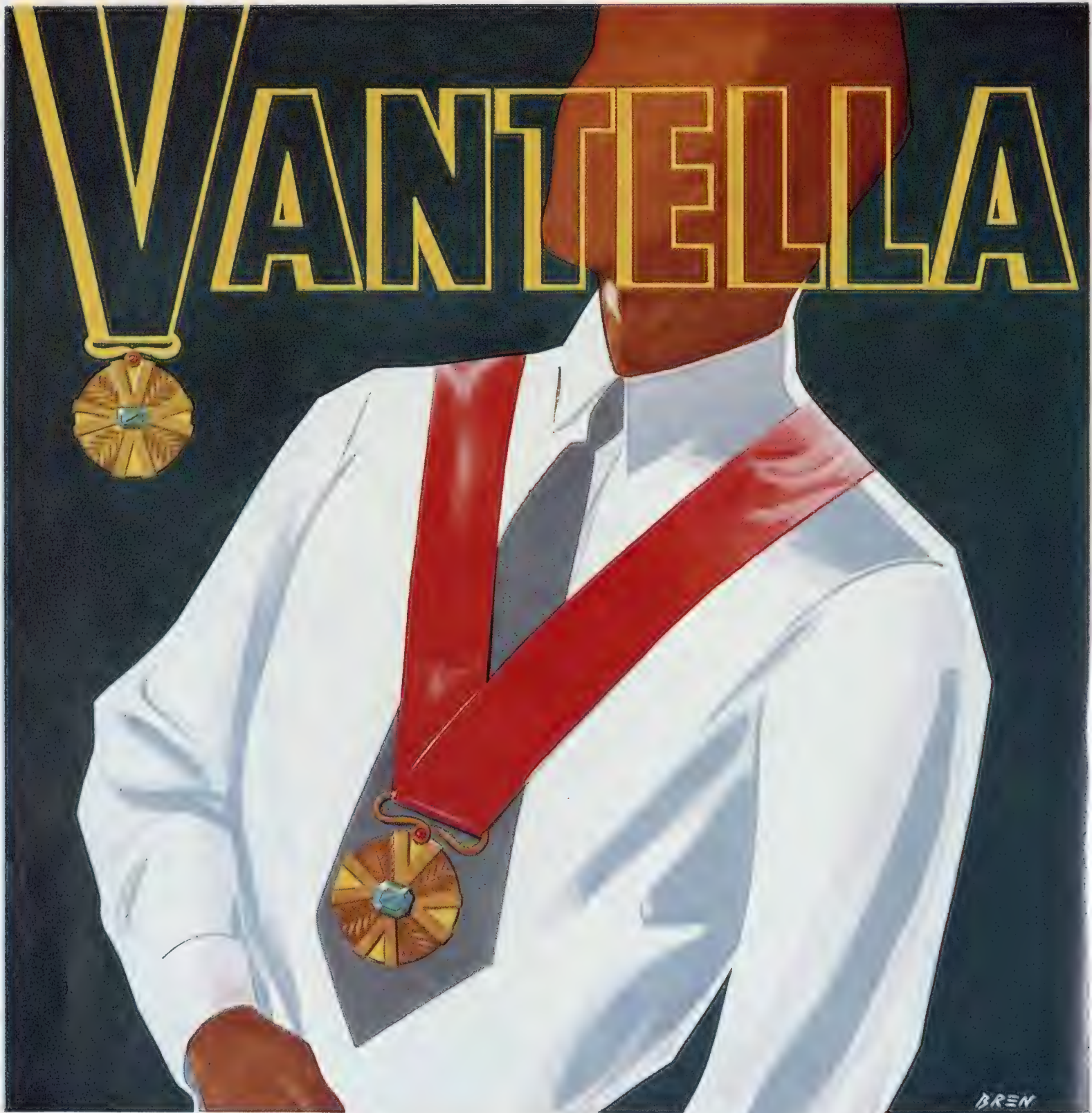
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Beef for Christmas*(Continued from page 60)*

Looking back now I know that the few moments that followed were the last we had of what one might call everyday life at Natchett. We talked normally, or as normally as those somewhat strained people were able to talk, and although I at least felt no particular anxiety about Philip Meece it seemed to me that we were waiting for something. At all events as Dr. Siddley entered all turned towards him.

"Merton," he said, and even in those two syllables one heard an undertone of shock and distress.

Watlow crossed to him and Siddley whispered something to him. I thought that Philip Meece must have died or be suddenly gravely ill. When the two men turned to leave the room we all prepared to follow.

I will tell you at once what we saw as we peered into Philip Meece's room. He was hanging, head lolling, from a rope slung from the high eaves of the room and beside him two chairs lay, one on its side, the other on its back, evidently kicked over by him. The window of the room was open.

I heard Beef's heavy breathing beside me and saw him staring at the figure, his eyes going up with the rope and down to the chairs.

Siddley stepped forward. A knife was produced and the rope was cut, Siddley catching the limp figure and carrying it to the bed. The rope was so tight round Meece's throat and so securely knotted that it had to be cut.

"Quite dead," Siddley said.

"How long?" Beef's voice sounded authoritative.

"Can't say exactly. I have no experience of this sort of thing. About half an hour, I should judge."

Beef asked Siddley only one other question.

"Did you open the window when you came up first?"

"No," replied the doctor decisively. "I touched nothing."

I looked aside at Merton Watlow. I had the feeling that the big man was deeply moved but controlling himself admirably. He turned to his nephew, the Major.

"Alec, will you please telephone the police at once?"

"Certainly."

"Stanley, you are quite sure that nothing whatever can be done? Artificial respiration or anything?"

"Oh no. His neck's broken."

"Then we will go downstairs."

THE company moved away but as I saw Beef hanging about in the passage outside I did not follow the rest but pretended to go to my room.

"I suppose it was Meece who was writing the anonymous letters?" I said when we were alone.

"I don't see what makes you think so."

"His suicide, of course."

"Or murder," replied Beef and made for Meece's room.

In a moment like this Beef was at his best. He went about his business swiftly and confidently.

"Not much time before Wiggs arrives," he said.

Wiggs was the C.I.D. inspector at Braxham under whom Beef

had worked. I knew that Beef disliked his one-time superior officer.

I watched as Beef pulled out a tape measure and began to take a number of measurements—the length of rope left hanging, the length from where the rope was cut to where the knot began, the exact height of Meece, the height of the chairs.

He then paused for a few moments, apparently thinking deeply. I could almost hear his brain ticking over. When he moved again it was fast. He dived for the chairs and made a minute examination of their legs and cross-bars. He then went to the window-sill and remained there for a few moments.

"All right," he said. "Let's go downstairs. I've seen all I want to see."

MERTON WATLOW had taken his guests to the library, tactfully avoiding the room in which we had received our first shock. But when Beef saw this he excused himself for a moment and made for the drawing-room. He came back and remained with us.

After that all went smoothly. The police made a formal inspection, another doctor was called, and we were told that we should be wanted at the inquest but until then there was nothing to detain us. I felt all an Englishman's satisfaction with his national institutions and a great admiration for the police and medical profession when I saw how admirably and calmly all this was done. I could see nothing in Detective-Inspector Wiggs to arouse Beef's hostility but I knew this was an old wound.

It did not seem very long in fact before we retired to bed.

IT was not until we had reached Beef's house next day and were alone in what he called his "front room" that he expounded his view of the matter.

"Of course it was murder," he said. "You ought to have seen that at once."

"Why?"

"You ask yourself a few whys. Why was the window open? Why didn't Meece leave any sort of letter if he wanted to do for himself? Why was the rope so tight round his neck? Why was his wife away at Christmas for the first time in ten years? You may well ask why."

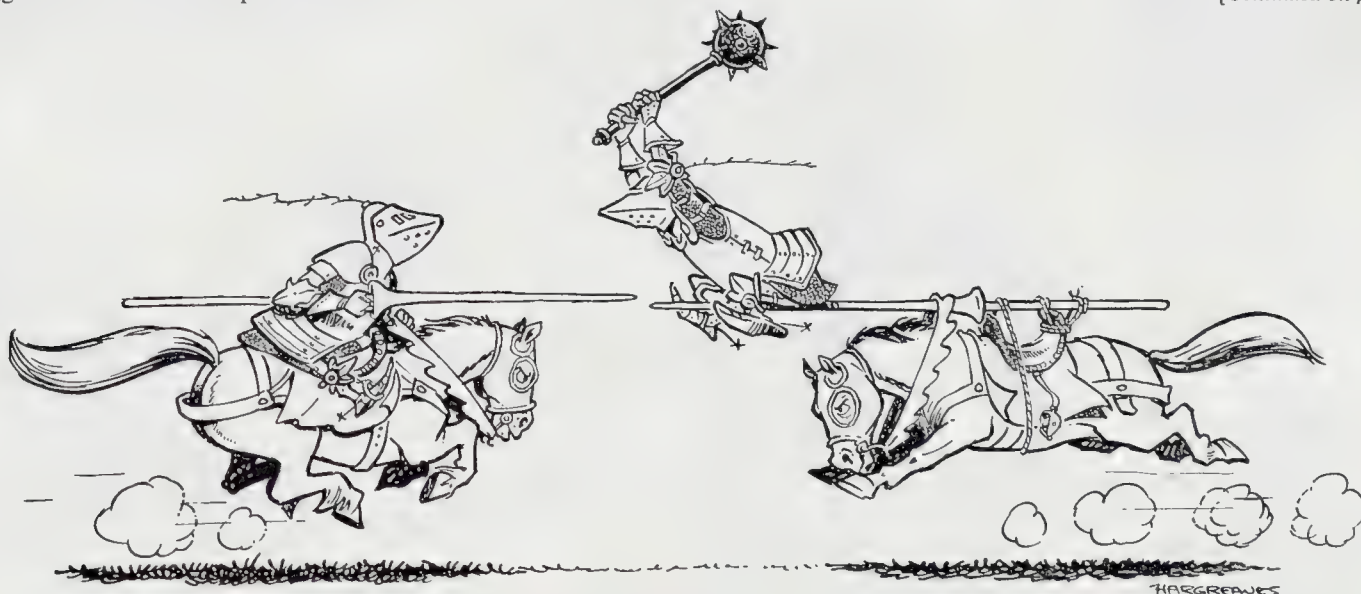
"Come on, then. Let's hear what you think."

"Murder made to look like suicide. Between dinner and that lark with the conjurer in the drawing-room. . . ."

"Beef! Raymond Gidley is not a conjurer."

"Well, whatever he is. Before we sat down to watch him someone had gone up to Meece's room, overpowered or more likely drugged him for a few moments, knotted that rope so tight round his neck that he couldn't yell, tied him up with the two chairs in position so that he could just keep alive by standing on tiptoe, but no more. He couldn't release the rope, he couldn't haul himself up, he couldn't escape. He wasn't a big or a strong man as you know and there was absolutely nothing he could do."

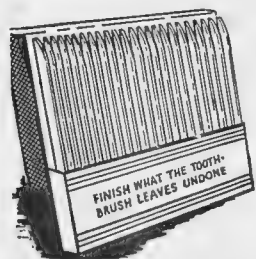
"If that's really what happened," I said, "it won't be hard to find the murderer. We have a nice collection of suspects though we were treating them as suspects in something else. You say

(Continued on page 67)

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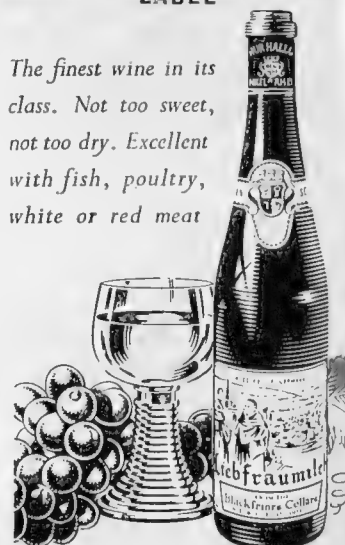
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Beef for Christmas

(Continued from page 65)

it was done while we were waiting in the drawing-room. I know exactly how long each of them took to get there."

BEEF looked at me as though he were sorry for me. "Won't be necessary," he said. "I know who did it. I told you he slung up Philip Meece so that when he dropped it would look like suicide."

"Then, I suppose, the murderer pulled the chairs away and watched him die?"

"Oh no, he was too clever for that. He wanted an alibi. He had to be somewhere else when Meece died, and he was. He's got all of us to prove it."

"Then how. . . ."

"You should know. You were watching while he did it. You saw Philip Meece murdered."

"Don't be absurd, Beef."

"So was I, for that matter. The murderer passed a double rope round the leg of the lower chair, then dropped it out of the window. You can see where the chair's rubbed and the window-sill, too. He only had to give this double rope a jerk then pull one line down and all trace of anything but suicide, he supposed, would disappear."

"But when did he do it?"

"When he was pulling those curtains back for the contortionist."

"Merton Watlow?"

"Of course. I suspected something funny as soon as I was called in. I know these people who like an expert witness round who they don't think is too clever. When we got down there and Meece wasn't interested in the letters after Watlow had told me he was going out of his mind about them, I knew someone was lying. Then I heard a few things from Rumbold. This was the first time the servants had ever had a party which would keep them all occupied on Christmas Eve. Watlow, it appears, was most particular about them all being together there. And, as I say, the first time Meece's wife had been away for Christmas."

"Then there was another thing. Watlow hated noise and never allowed music of any sort in the house. Yet before that trapeze

artist came on he was playing it as loud as it would go—in case anyone should hear anything from the room above. But what finally settled it for me was what I saw in the drawing-room when I looked in after you and I came downstairs. It was in the corner by the window where Watlow had stood and the window was still a few inches open. Rope. A nice length of thin strong rope. He hadn't had a chance to clear it away. Not that it would matter so much, he thought. With all those theatricals and a curtain fixed up and that, it wouldn't look so odd. But I knew the reason for it. He pulled it down, you see, by the same motion he used for pulling back the stage curtain."

I STILL find it hard to believe. What possible motive could Watlow have had?"

"The best there is. What you call the eternal triangle. You didn't like me staring at Freda Meece that first afternoon, did you? But I had my reason. As soon as I saw those diamonds she had on I knew they had probably been given her by a very rich man. If Watlow saw me looking at them, I thought, and he had given them to her, he'd soon tell her to put them away and not show off any more tomfoolery while I was round. That's just what happened."

"There's only one little point I'm doubtful about. Was Philip Meece genuinely ill that night? If so it was a bit of luck for Watlow. If not he may have been *made* ill. Or Watlow may have done something else to keep him upstairs. It's not very important, but I should like to know. I expect we shall in time."

"But if you're so sure, Beef, why didn't you tell what you knew to Detective-Inspector Wiggs? You surely don't want a cowardly murderer to escape?"

"To Wiggs? After what he did when I had that trouble over the vicar's bicycle? Not likely. I'll send a memo round to the Yard tomorrow and let them sort it out. You're right in calling it a cowardly crime. It was. And the murderer wasn't as clever as he thought. He made the same mistake as you do, Townsend."

"What's that?"

"Underrating me," said Sergeant Beef. "It doesn't do. And now, let's have a tumble down the sink. What? A drink, of course."

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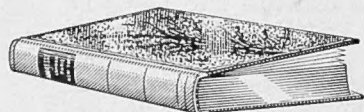
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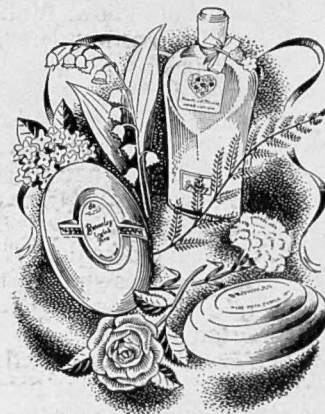
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